

## DREAMING AND WAKING.

BY LILLIE M——.

## CHAPTER I.

THE twilight was fast approaching—the twilight of a dreary November day—its fog and gloom hung like a cloud over the city. It was the kind of weather when the rich gather closely around their cheerful fires; when the *poor* dwell fearfully on the coming winter; when the strong, heart-wish for sympathy rises up from many a lonely wanderer, with cheerful, glowing pictures of home and loving faces, that fade, alas! amid the evening darkness.

Among the carriages that drove rapidly along was one that contained an orphan girl and her uncle. The poor child had just landed from a sea voyage; she found herself in a strange city, where all looked gloomy and forbidding, and she shrank back into a corner of the carriage and said nothing; her lips seemed glued together, and to her uncle's well-meant attempts at conversation she replied only in monosyllables.

Glyman Entworth was an excellent, kind-hearted man; and as long as he was provided with a good dinner, he would not put himself out of his way to injure any one. His temper was a little chafed just then; repeated glances at his watch had convinced him beyond a doubt that it was five o'clock, and yet his ears could not be refreshed by that tocsin of the soul, the dinner-bell, in consequence of his magnanimous attendance upon his orphan niece; and yet there she sat, sad, shy, and silent. He could not find it in his heart to be otherwise than kind to the poor orphan; for old memories of that gentle, elder sister rose up before him, and he fancied himself a boy again, running to her for protection, when in danger of punishment for his mischievous deeds, and she shielding him so prettily with those white arms of her's; or when moved by his piteous sobs for some youthful disappointment, how kindly she would take him to her own room, and allow him to disturb her drawers as he pleased by way of amusement. It seemed to him then that no one ever had so many things as sister Annie. Then, too, he remembered the pale, sad face, and the large tears that fell upon his cheek, as she wildly kissed him for the last time. She had married a wealthy Southerner, and went with him to Georgia. He was quite a

large boy when she went away, and when, after a few years, the tidings came of her death, he was old enough to feel it as deeply as any one. She had left one child, a little girl, but they knew that it was well cared for by its father's family; and after a little while, when the period of mourning had expired, Annie was almost forgotten.

Before long a letter from Mr. Ludlow announced his second marriage, and then all correspondence between them ceased for some time; until lately Mr. Entworth had received a letter from his brother-in-law in which he spoke of his misfortunes, and unpromising affairs—breathing at the same time very much like a hint for him to claim his niece.

This was not so easy a matter as Mr. Ludlow appeared to think. Glyman Entworth, too, had married, and not a gentle, yielding character, to whom his wish was law. Indulged at home, and spoilt in society, Mrs. Entworth had a will of her own, and a great idea of being mistress in her own house. Entworth, although engaged in a profitable business, was not a wealthy man; and his wife prided herself much on making a great show with little money. When, therefore, the question of the new inmate was first proposed, it did not, by any means, meet with her approbation.

"This Florida Ludlow," said she, "will trouble me in more ways than one. A girl of seventeen can no longer be considered a child, and treated as such; and poor and dependant as she is, the expense of receiving her is another consideration. These Southern girls are the most helpless creatures in existence; so that, instead of relieving me at all, she will only make trouble."

But Glyman Entworth *had* a heart, although not very apt to display the possession; and to his wife's astonishment, his favorite dinner remained unnoticed, while he poured forth a torrent of eloquence in favor of the motherless girl. At length, flushed with victory, and rather surprised at himself, he turned to the creature comforts before him.

"But I do not see," continued his wife, "why we should have all the expense put upon *us*. Her father, evidently, cares nothing about her; and, with his large family, will leave to her relations

the duty of supporting her. There are your sister and brother, as nearly related to her as we are."

"I will speak to them," said he, "Henry, you know, starts for Europe in a short time—but Emma, of course, will do something. We can give her a home, for the present; and among us all we can easily contrive to furnish her with the necessary dress."

Mrs. Entworth was but half-convinced; and anticipated the arrival of the young Southerner with no very pleasurable feelings.

The carriage drew up at the door of a plain, three-story, brick mansion; and Florida, almost bewildered, was lifted out by her uncle and led into the house. Mrs. Entworth, a handsome but haughty-looking woman, came forward to kiss her, and then led her to the fire. She scrutinized her niece with a curious gaze; but through the multitude of wrappings that enveloped the young Southerner, and the half-twilight, it was almost impossible to distinguish—she could only see that she looked pale and cold.

A stiff figure was seated in one of the windows, stitching away at some linen collars as though her very life depended upon the effort. Florida cast a timid glance in that direction, and she stepped forward rather coldly to welcome her; Mrs. Entworth introducing her as her sister, Miss Douglas.

The rooms were large and pleasant—the coal-fire had a cheerful look—and the furniture was handsome and well-chosen. There was no dining-room on the same floor; and, as Mrs. Entworth despised basements, dinner was served in the back-parlor. Florida heard her uncle address the quiet, plain-looking girl as "Susan;" but the answers that he obtained were as short as possible.

Seated at the dinner-table, and divested of her wrappings, the stranger could now be more advantageously observed. She was extremely slight, almost fragile-looking; but her features were not regular, and the expression of her face, though sweet, was extremely pensive. There was something very winning, though, in the expression of that pretty mouth, with its pouting, childish lips—a something that went to the heart of Glyman Entworth and whispered, "Annie." A profusion of pale brown hair was wound into one rich knot, and her skin was delicately fair, while the slightest tinge of color came and went with every word. These were her only beauties.

Mrs. Entworth soon decided that the great fault of her face was its extreme paleness and want of animation; but Florida felt shy and sad, and scarcely spoke all the evening—while the

conscious color rose and died away in her cheek at every glance she encountered.

## CHAPTER II.

THE next morning, Florida awoke to the consciousness of a strange room and strange company. Susan Douglas stood pinning her neat breakfast collar before the glass, and her companion watched, with a sort of sleepy interest, her anxiety that it should meet exactly in the middle, and that not a wrinkle should disturb its smooth surface. Miss Douglas was certainly a very plain-looking girl; and so thought Florida, as she scanned her features in the clear, morning light; but there was an exquisite neatness about her that extended to every fold of her dress. Her beautifully abundant hair shone in one unbroken glossy sheet to where it met the carefully-twisted knot that was wound with artistic taste.

Taking up a richly ornamented book, the glittering cross on the back proclaiming its title, she was soon absorbed in the contents. Florida listlessly watched her proceedings; and at the first pause in reading, she asked, in a sleepy tone,

"Is it time to get up?"

"Breakfast will be ready in ten minutes," replied her companion, adding, "can I assist you in dressing?" as the young Southerner's reputation for helplessness crossed her mind. But no smile accompanied the question.

"No, thank you," replied Florida, hurriedly; and in another moment, she was left alone. Her fine underclothes, trimmed with lace, offered quite a contrast to Miss Douglas' plainer wardrobe; but with *her* everything was in keeping—while poor Florida arrayed herself in a thin, summer morning-dress, throwing a shawl over her shoulders to keep off the chill of a cold, November day.

When she entered the breakfast-room, her lips were blue with cold; and quite moved by her half-frozen appearance, her uncle drew her close up to him, and placing her before the fire, asked her how long it would take her to thaw. Every one's looks proclaimed that breakfast was ready; and with a smile and apology for her shawl, Florida pronounced herself quite warmed.

"Bring up breakfast, Margaret," said Mrs. Entworth, in a tone which implied that it had been kept waiting long enough.

Florida's eyes filled with tears, she scarcely knew why; but she was obliged to control them and answer a laughing question of her uncle's. A weight was resting on her heart—a suffocating

feeling of loneliness that could not be shaken off. Miss Douglas' silence seemed habitual; scarcely a word passed her lips, and very little food.

"I wish that Susan would not do so!" said Mr. Entworth, in a worried tone, after she had left the table, "I do not believe in this constant fasting—it seems scarcely better than a Catholic!"

"That is because you know nothing about it," replied his wife, "I consider it perfectly right to fast on Friday."

"What do *you* think of it, Florida?" asked her uncle.

Florida must have thought it right to fast *all* the time, for scarcely a mouthful had she eaten since her arrival; but she answered absently:

"I do not know." She was thinking of other things.

Mrs. Entworth eyed her rather scrutinizingly; and could not help being struck with the beauty of the soft pink flush which the heat had brought to her cheek. It was like the inner hue of the sea-shell.

When Florida entered their apartment Susan Douglas was busily attiring herself in a plain cloak and hat. The day was cold and raw.

"Could I not accompany you?" asked Florida, timidly; for the prospect in-doors looked rather dull.

"I do not think you would care to go where I am going," replied Susan, coldly, without informing her of her destination.

Florida did not ask it, but looked wistfully after her companion as she departed.

"Ah!" thought Mrs. Entworth, as in passing the parlor, she heard the piano touched as it had never been touched before, "this is probably the nature of her acquirements."

"Are you fond of music?" she asked, as Florida started at the sight of an auditor.

"Very," replied the young musician, while her eyes glowed with enthusiasm, "shall I play for you?" she continued.

"If you please," replied Mrs. Entworth; and a strain of melody filled the room, like the voice of nightingales. The aunt began to think that, after all, she might not prove so very useless an incumbrance, for a talent like that could charm a whole company.

"Very beautiful indeed," said Mrs. Entworth, approvingly, "very few young ladies can play like *that*. Of course," said she, a few moments after, "you are too good a musician to know much about housekeeping?"

"I should be very glad to learn," replied Florida.

"I know what *that* means," thought her aunt. Florida was not called upon to exercise her talents in the housekeeping line; but her aunt, having discovered that she was an adept in fine needle-work, soon furnished her with abundant employment. Her tasks were so beautifully executed that Mrs. Entworth could not withhold her praise; and the girl's heart was somewhat lightened of its burden of dependence.

Florida's tasty fingers were twisting a bright colored ribbon into various bows, as she wondered all the time what detained Miss Douglas.

"I wish," exclaimed her aunt, "that Susan would select a more congenial day for such errands. She is by no means strong, and will probably come home sick."

"Then she was not *obliged* to go out to-day?" asked Florida, somewhat timidly.

"Not *obliged*, except by her own silly notions of benevolence. This Mrs. Bishop is a poor woman with several children, (of course;) and Susan took it into her head that she might be suffering this cold day for want of fuel. I do not call myself hard-hearted, by any means, and I offered to send a servant—but no, Susan must go herself."

Florida shivered involuntarily as she glanced from the window; she felt an earnest desire to benefit some one more miserable than herself, but her delicate Southern frame was not calculated for cold and fatigue.

Miss Douglas soon after entered, looking pale and cold.

"I do think, Susan," exclaimed her sister, "that you are the most ridiculous girl!"

She drew a chair for her close to the fire, and Miss Douglas sank wearily into it.

"That poor Mrs. Bishop," said she, in a languid tone, "I found her with only a crust of bread, and a little charcoal. I saw her comfortably supplied before I left her; but it is not that *alone* that has wearied me so."

"Have you seen *him*?" asked her sister, earnestly.

Susan gave a faint motion of assent, and Florida modestly left the room. What passed between them she never knew; but, as Mrs. Entworth had predicted, the consequences of this visit were more than temporary. Miss Douglas was confined to her room by severe indisposition for several weeks; and during this illness Florida could not help admiring her uncomplaining patience. Not a murmur escaped her lips; and the nurse's office proved light enough. The young Southerner pleaded so hard to be permitted to attend the invalid, and appeared so happy when she could be of any use, that the

charge of the sickness was consigned almost entirely to her.

### CHAPTER III.

"COULD I not see her for a moment?"

"I think not," replied Florida, "she is not yet well enough to receive visitors."

"Is she ill, then? What is the matter with her?"

The speaker was a remarkably handsome young man, and in his inquiries after Susan Douglas betrayed a degree of interest by no means consistent with the indifference of a mere acquaintance. Florida, who happened to be in the drawing-room, was obliged to receive him in the absence of her aunt; but his close questions embarrassed her, and with a sort of presentiment that his visit would not be agreeable to Mrs. Entworth, she stood waiting for his departure—detained against her will, by his evident determination to ascertain anything she might wish to conceal respecting Miss Douglas.

To his last question she replied:

"She took a bad cold the last day that she was out, and has been ill ever since."

"I thought so!" he exclaimed, "I knew, when I saw her in that bleak, out-of-the-way region, that she would hardly reach home unscathed. Will you give her this?" he asked, placing in Florida's hand a card on which was engraved the name, "Gilbert Weathersfield." There was some writing, in pencil marks, which she carefully avoided reading.

Susan Douglas had read the card, and seemed to fall into a reverie. Florida glided noiselessly to the door.

"Do not go!" exclaimed her patient, "I love to have you about me. If you will not think me too poetically inclined, for so matter-of-fact a person, I will tell you that you remind me of moonlight, or the evening dew—you are so soft and refreshing in a sick room. How do you manage to glide about so, without touching the ground?"

Florida smiled and blushed as, at Miss Douglas's request, she seated herself on the foot of the bed; and her companion watched, with a half sigh, the bright rose color that stole so beautifully to her cheek, and then lingeringly departed.

"Florida," said she, suddenly, "I feel more grateful than I can express for your kindness and attention during my illness; and I feel, too, that it is altogether undeserved, for I have been as cold and neglectful to you as I am to other strangers. You must pardon my negligence, and accept my entire attention to my duties as some excuse; but I should have remembered that you

were indeed a stranger—not only to me, but to every one around."

The tears stood in Florida's eyes, but she repressed them, and answered with a smile that gleamed through them like an April sunbeam.

"You would like to know who this gentleman is?" continued Miss Douglas.

Florida was endowed with a full share of the curiosity which belongs to most girls of seven-teen to hear the Alpha and Omega of a love story; so instead of disclaiming any such thoughts, she smiled again.

"I was once engaged to that man," said her companion, with a countenance suddenly grave.

"Why did you not marry him?" asked Florida, innocently. Then, rather thoughtfully, she added: "He is very handsome."

"Yes," rejoined Miss Douglas, with an involuntary smile, "and you are, doubtless, pondering as to what state of his mental organs could possibly have led him to fancy *me*."

Florida earnestly disclaimed any such reflections; and the color that now mantled in her cheek made her really beautiful.

"Were I a school girl," resumed her companion, "I should, probably, take the greatest delight in telling you this story, as a proof, perhaps, of my own charms; but as they do not exist—at least, externally—my twenty-five years of experience have convinced me that there are very few things which should be left to the imagination. Why Gilbert ever *did* fancy me I do not exactly know. We were brought up together in the country; and I believe that the waving trees, and flowers, and greensward, somewhat soften down the asperities in one's appearance—as in a picture, you know, much depends upon drapery and effect. I believe that he first imagined himself in love with me when I happened to fish a little boy out of a stream into which he had fallen; though he always *would* object to my carrying baskets of provisions to that same little boy's parents. Gilbert was handsome, talented, and rich, while I was neither one nor the other; and his father, who entertained grand views for his son, doubtless considered him quite safe with me.

"But when, as we grew too old to romp any more in the woods, and twist wreaths of dandelions, Gilbert persisted that his affections were firmly fixed upon me, and acknowledged that I had given him mine in return, his father grew seriously alarmed, and forbade all intercourse between us.

"He took Gilbert into the library, whose solemn magnificence inspired an involuntary feeling of awe; he kept him there nearly all night, rousing

his ambition as he pointed to the stern-looking busts around, whose originals had called forth, by their talents and exertions, a nation's plaudits; he showed him portraits of his ancestors, whose proud features seemed frowning down contempt upon their spiritless descendant; and lastly, he opened a small case, when a face burst upon him fairly dazzling in its fresh, youthful beauty. The eyes beamed with light, and a loving smile parted the small, red lips; while a shower of soft curls descended to the slender waist.

"His father told him of losses and bankruptcy staring him in the face—of the thousands which hung upon one word from those girlish lips—her money would supply the gilding that was needed to frame his talents and energies so that the world might see them; and he drew a picture of wealth and renown with the beautiful Ada, or poverty and obscurity with me.

"Gilbert repeated to me the whole scene, in the interview he sought after all was over; and then fell on his knees and begged for my love still. He appeared," she added, bitterly, "to consider that a *pour passer le tems*, as long as it did not interfere with his interests. He said that his senses had forsaken him that night in the library—that he did not know what he did; and yet he remembered perfectly well the moment that he pronounced the irrevocable 'yes.' The candles had burned low in their sockets—the lofty apartment seemed enveloped in gloom—and before him stood his father, whose haughty face, stamped with the lines of care and trouble, reminded him of some magician of olden time—and his own features, as he caught a glimpse of them in an opposite mirror, almost frightened him with their ghastliness. He *fell*—and the beautiful, gentle heiress became the bride of Gilbert Weathersfield; while *I*—there was nothing left for me but *heaven*."

Poor Florida! she was young and romantic, and she no longer wondered that Susan Douglas had lost all interest in the world. While listening to another's trials, we do not know how soon our own will come.

"You remember the beautiful woman whom I pointed out to you the other day, as she was alighting from her carriage?" resumed Miss Douglas.

"Oh, yes!" replied Florida, eagerly, for she was a warm admirer of beauty, "I can never forget that exquisite face!"

"That was Mrs. Gilbert Weathersfield."

"Was it possible!" And yet why was she surprised? Because the face was so brightly beautiful in its expression of unclouded joyousness? *She* had never heard the story that was

revealed to Florida, as the two sat there, in their quiet room, by the glowing firelight.

## CHAPTER IV.

THE days glided on, and Florida's young life lost the glad tone of youth; for she felt that she was a *dependant*—felt that she had no home but that accorded to her by strangers—no mother on whose bosom she could weep away transient griefs—no sister to share her troubles and her pleasures—no brother to shield her, with his manly heart, from the life-blasts of adversity. Her uncle was kind to her in his careless way, for the memory of that gentle sister would have protected the lonely orphan; her aunt treated her well, and Susan Douglas seemed more like a sister since she had made her the confidant of her sorrows; and yet a gloom brooded over her heart like the heavy curtain of night. Her father's letters were few and far between; and he seemed entirely engrossed by those at home.

"No one to love me," she would murmur, in the dreamy twilight, "not a single heart to beat one love response to mine—no lips to frame sweet words for me." She loved to sit and dream, buried in the recesses of some deep arm-chair; with no companion save the flickering firelight, that threw strange shapes upon the wall, and called up memories of buried loved ones, she would sit and people the world with her own imaginings—unmindful of the daily real that came to destroy the frost work of her girlish fancies.

In the midst of company, and music, and merriment, Florida sat still and unnoticed; her sweet, varying color, and gentle face winning no more than a passing glance, until the slight, timid-looking girl was seated at the piano, and music notes fell upon their ears, sweet and lingering as the last strains of a broken heart; *then* her power was acknowledged, and they awoke from their blindness to see in the kindling eye and flushed cheek the enthusiasm of a noble art.

But Florida shrank from their praise and flattery; they were so evidently intended for *pay*, and bribes for farther amusement, that, hurt and wounded, she would withdraw again to her corner, and read, like some sybil of olden time, the faces of those around. Florida possessed the quick penetration of a delicate nature, and she did not see one that seemed to answer her yearning for love and sympathy. Like a faded flower, she remained shut from the gaze of the prying and indifferent, and gathered her sweetness in her own heart.

She sat thus, one evening, looking, in her snowy

dress, like some faint, white cloud; and as she sat, a rich, warm light seemed stealing into her soul until it glowed again. She listened to the voice near her, and caught tones that seemed like some mysterious strain of music which floods the heart with vague imaginings, and strange feelings that have no utterance in words.

She turned and saw the speaker. A handsome, haughty-looking man, past his first prime, whose dark, melancholy eyes now and then rested on his companion with an indifferent glance, and then turned off as though seeking some object of interest. He looked pale and delicate; and his whole air was that of one forced into a scene to which he was unaccustomed, and in which he took no interest. Florida's timid nature bowed before the pride that sat enthroned upon his curling lip; and yet she admired it, as one gazes upon the sun's noon-day splendor.

She sat reading his features in her shaded corner; and in those few moments she had invested him with every noble attribute. She imagined him like herself, lonely, uncared-for—despising the hollow words of those around him, and seeking in vain for a pearl among the pebbles by whom he was surrounded.

He was gone; and she looked in vain for the tall, dark figure among the crowd. Listlessly she seated herself at the piano, for she had fancied those deep eyes perchance raised with an approving glance at the young musician; perhaps he might even seek an introduction—linger by her side for the rest of the evening; and then what happiness to be handed to the carriage by him? But now, she felt disappointed; her heart sank, and her fingers moved wearily over the keys. But her auditors saw no difference in the strain, and sick at heart, she turned from their praises—glad to go home and brood over her disappointment.

## CHAPTER V.

"Come down stairs, dear, as soon as you can—Mrs. Maberidge is in the drawing-room, and she wishes to see you."

It was the voice of Susan Douglas, but Florida's heart failed her. She shrank from Mrs. Maberidge as from a contact with polished steel. She was her own aunt—her mother's sister—and yet she trembled before the icy coldness of her manner.

It was now spring, and Florida knew that the term of her stay at her uncle Entworth's had expired—she was to spend the summer with her aunt. It seemed like getting into a variety of cold beds on a winter's night; as soon as the chill

was taken from one she might go to another as cold as at first. She knew how Mrs. Maberidge's invitation would be given; the manner would seem to imply that she might have so much to eat and drink and a place to sleep in—but she need expect nothing farther, all avenues to her aunt's heart were imperviously closed against her.

These thoughts passed through her mind as she stood smoothing her beautiful hair; unconsciously putting off the evil moment as long as possible. Tremblingly she descended, and her timid steps scarcely made a sound upon the carpet. Her aunt's face was a little turned from her, and she gazed upon the figure that seemed formed to inspire awe. Large, but well-proportioned, she sat, in all the dignity of her camel's-hair shawl and ostrich feathers, conversing with Mrs. Entworth.

She turned, at length; and somewhat touched by Florida's evident embarrassment, pressed the coldest of kisses on her flushed cheek as she inquired after her health.

"I am well, thank you," replied her niece, in a scarcely audible voice. Her heart clung to her present home—loath to be again thrust out upon the world.

"How would you like to come and make me a visit, now?" inquired Mrs. Maberidge.

"You are very kind indeed," replied Florida, without looking up.

"Oh, well, we will imagine all that," continued her aunt, patronizingly, "and it is settled that you are to come to me next week."

Florida could only bow in silence; she felt that she had no right to a choice of residences—and again the bitter feeling of dependance rested on her heart.

"I shall miss you very much, Florida," said Mrs. Entworth, kindly.

It was evening—the last evening she was to spend there; and her uncle's arm fondly supported her trembling figure. He had learned to love the quiet face and gentle voice.

"Remember, Florida," said he, affectionately, "that you will always have a home here. If other places weary, come back to us and remain."

"Perhaps Florida may look down upon such a home as *this*, before a great while," said her aunt, significantly, "your sister is fond of matchmaking, and her position enables her to command more fashionable society than we can collect."

Hopeful young Florida! A pair of dark, earnest eyes seemed looking into her own—a manly hand was clasping her's, and she was happy.

But when she reached her own apartment, the April tears came pouring forth like summer rain;

and she threw herself on the couch in a paroxysm of grief. Again the lonely, dependant feeling was clouding all her sunshine.

"Florida," whispered the gentle voice of Susan Douglas, "there are worse griefs in the world than yours. Time will bring a smile that tears were ever wasted on such troubles as these. When I was a child, I buried a pet kitten—and in a passionate outbreak of sorrow, I knelt by the little grave I had made, and felt that life, for me, had lost all its sunshine. How many times since has the same scene been enacted over again! And how many times more it will be enacted! Each successive grief makes the *last* one appear light."

Florida thought of Susan's own heart history, and felt that *that* indeed could not be borne.

"You are young," said Susan, sadly, "you have youth and beauty, and your future journey may be through a pathway of light."

The rich, warm color rose to Florida's cheek, bringing a train of exquisite feelings. Involuntarily she glanced at the mirror. The description of Katharine, in "The Ogilvies," applies equally well to her.

"In a moment a delicious consciousness of beauty stole over her. It was not vanity, but a wild gladness, that thereby she might be more worthy of him. She drew nearer; she gazed almost lovingly on the bright, young face reflected there; not as if it were her own, but as something fair and precious in his sight, which accordingly became most dear to her's. She looked into the depths of the dark, clear eyes, ah! one day it might be his joy to do the same. Simple, child-like Katharine!—a child in all but love—if thou couldst have died in that blissful dream!"

Susan Douglas gazed with an unconscious sigh on the smile that played around the dimpled mouth, and wondered what beautiful dream was flushing the soft cheek with the hue of an opening rose. But Florida slumbered on; she was smiling in her sleep; and her companion knelt down and prayed, "Lead us not into temptation."

## CHAPTER VI.

AGAIN WAS Florida a stranger, and a never-ending chill seemed hanging over her new home. Cold, proud, and distant, her aunt seemed to repulse all affection, and poor Florida was withering from neglect. The house was a beautiful country-seat, and the romantic scenery a never-ending theme of admiration; but she could not be satisfied with inanimate objects, and longed for some voice that would not speak in cold, measured tones.

There were beautiful children around her, the little Maberidges; and won by her sweet face and gentle manners, they showered upon her their loving caresses, till her heart glowed with love and warmth. Mr. Maberidge was a nonentity; he scarcely ever spoke when in the house, and seemed to think that furnishing money was all that would be expected of him. It certainly was all that his wife cared for. Mrs. Maberidge seemed scarcely conscious of her niece's presence; she had never taken the trouble to notice her—her whole time was occupied with novels, and she hardly knew whether Florida was dark or fair.

But, happening, one day, to raise her eyes from the book she was perusing, they fell, by chance, upon the graceful figure of the young Southerner, as she knelt on the lawn to return the caresses of her little cousins. The children had pulled down her hair, and the sunbeams that rested on it made it look like burnished gold; exercise had brought the warm color to her usually pale cheek, and lit up her eyes, until they seemed to dance with light.

All at once it burst upon Mrs. Maberidge that her niece was extremely pretty. Dreams, plots, and reflections crowded into her brain; and her eyes remained fastened upon Florida as though riveted there by a spell. The young girl looked up, and blushed beneath her aunt's protracted scrutiny.

With a strange sort of feeling, she obeyed the beckoning finger; and in obedience to her aunt's request, tremblingly seated herself beside her.

"Yes," soliloquized Mrs. Maberidge, "she really is almost beautiful. She has one of those taking faces that, once seen, are never forgotten. She might almost accomplish anything."

Florida sat waiting, with downcast eyes, for her aunt to speak.

"How old are you, Florida?" asked Mrs. Maberidge, suddenly.

"I shall be eighteen in a few days," was the reply.

"Eighteen!" repeated her aunt, "why, I was married at that age!"

Again that graceful figure rose up before her, and those dark eyes seemed reading her very soul.

"You are really very pretty," continued her aunt.

Her cheeks were fairly crimson now—it almost seemed as though *he* had said it.

"I suppose," continued Mrs. Maberidge, "that you have firmly made up your mind to marry a rich man?"

"Aunt!" exclaimed the young girl, while the

indignant blood mounted to her very brow. The flash in her eye was somewhat at variance with her usual gentleness.

"Nonsense!" replied Mrs. Maberidge, "you have, doubtless, said it to yourself hundreds of times—if you are so unwilling to confess it."

"Is it possible," exclaimed Florida, with a burst of tears, "that you can think so dreadfully of me?"

"Why, I think," replied her aunt, "that I am paying you quite a compliment to give you credit for so much sense. But since you seem so angry at the insinuation, what did you expect to do with yourself? Do you think of going out as a governess?"

Florida shuddered at the idea; and her aunt laughed as she continued:

"You will get over this, after a while—you have read too many novels. But, ungrateful as you are, I have been thinking of your welfare—I already had you married, and going off in your carriage. I think, too, that you would hardly object to the gentleman—he is just calculated to suit a silly, romantic girl."

Florida looked up with some degree of interest.

"His name, too, is rather taking—what do you think of Ernest Deltrieve?"

"It is beautiful," was the reply, "the name of Ernest always calls up a vision of dark, melancholy eyes, a marble brow, and a pensive countenance that rarely smiles, but when it does, it seems like sunshine on a darkened sky."

The picture was painted from memory.

Florida had forgotten time and place, and her aunt's laugh brought her rather unpleasantly back.

"As to 'marble brows,'" replied Mrs. Maberidge, "I must own that I prefer them of substantial flesh and blood. But you have exactly described Mr. Deltrieve," she continued, "where could you have seen him?"

A suspicion, at first pleasant, and then painful, crossed Florida's mind. Her first thought was: "I shall, then, see him again—be near him—perhaps speak to him;" but then she sadly reflected: "How can I ever look him in the face after my aunt's advice that I should captivate him, because he is a good match!"

"Mr. Deltrieve has a country-seat near here," continued Mrs. Maberidge, "and he and I are very good friends. I expect him here soon, and you will then have an opportunity of exercising your charms, for he is a great admirer of beauty. But I give you warning that he is very hard to catch; almost every young girl and widow in the city have tried their hands at it."

Florida slowly left the room, perfectly dis-

gusted. Was she to be placed in the list of fortune-hunters?

## CHAPTER VII.

WHAT was it that had suddenly made Florida's step so elastic, the carriage so easy to spring from, and everything around so lovely? Every object seemed bathed in a soft rose color; and as she ran lightly up the stairs to her own apartment, a glimpse of her face in the mirror almost startled her with its loveliness. It was not the features, they were the same—it was the expression.

It was evening, and the soft, summer wind, as it played among the trees, seemed singing a song of love and hope—the beautiful sunset was flooding the room with molten gold—and happiness lit up her face with constant smiles. She rejoiced in her youth and beauty; rejoiced that she had yet counted but eighteen years, and that her eyes were bright, and her cheek flushed with the hue of health.

A single glance from a pair of lustrous eyes had effected this change. They passed Mr. Deltrieve in their drive, a bow for her aunt, and a glance for her were all that they had received; but that look still haunted her. Her aunt had directed her attention to the splendid horses—but she could only see himself.

She still reclined in the arm-chair into which she had thrown herself, and those dark eyes seemed gleaming on her from amid the space; when the noise of carriage wheels aroused her, and putting aside the summer-curtains, she saw the well-remembered figure alighting from a carriage. He was, then, in the house; her heart throbbed so violently at the idea that its beatings were quite audible amid the stillness.

Habit directed her steps to the mirror, but her soft hair was more beautiful in its half confusion than any art could make it—her simple mourning-dress set off her girlish figure—and a peach-like bloom was on her cheek. The next moment her aunt had dragged her to the drawing-room; and she found herself face to face with Ernest Deltrieve.

She could not look up—she could not speak; the spell of his presence was on her, and she trembled lest he should perceive her emotion. His eyes rested admiringly on the fair, Madonna-like face, over which the blushes were sitting in bashful confusion; and she felt that he was looking at her, although she dared not raise her eyes.

His voice roused her, at length, from her reverie, and in a scarcely audible tone she

answered his question. Mr. Deltrieve began to think that her timidity was really *natural*.

"This is my little nun," said Mrs. Maberidge, "the poor child has seen so little of the world that the very sight of a gentleman almost frightens her to death—even the sound of her own voice startles her."

Embarrassed as Florida was, she thought that this description must strike Mr. Deltrieve as particularly ludicrous; and, unable to control her risible faculties, she laughed, much to her aunt's astonishment. There was something so catching in the pretty laugh, which showed her dimples and white teeth, that Mr. Deltrieve involuntarily smiled too; and Florida began to feel more at her ease. She could answer his questions now, and even ask others in return; but still the beautiful color mantled in her cheek whenever she encountered the gaze of those wonderful eyes.

Mr. Deltrieve, with his experience and knowledge of the world, could not but smile at Florida's romantic outbursts, her natural, child-like ideas, and her evidently unsuspecting view of human nature. He had found a pretty wild flower, the study of which interested him; and he liked to fathom her heart, which, like a well, became still clearer and purer.

Her beautiful thoughts were freely given to his inspection; and all the while she drank deep draughts, the effects of which could never be erased. He spoke of books, and the beautiful in art; Florida listened like one entranced, and her beaming eyes seemed drinking in his every word.

Mr. Deltrieve was flattered—her beauty and youthful simplicity attracted him; and this silent flattery was so unlike the adulation to which he was accustomed, that he felt a greater interest in the young, unknown girl than he cared to acknowledge. He had been courted for his wealth and position—the treasures of his mind had quite escaped the notice of the gold seekers; and now, astonished at himself, he gave full vent to feelings that had long been suppressed.

Young, unworlly Florida! She had unconsciously used the most potent flattery that art could attain, like a child playing with edged tools, and ignorant of their sharpness. And yet Mr. Deltrieve often smiled at her perfect ignorance of worldly forms—her simplicity appeared to him *extrême*. But he could see beneath this a rich mine of thought and feeling—an undiscovered talent that seemed waiting for him to bring it forth. He recommended various books, and Florida instantly expressed her intention of reading them; her delight considerably increased when he offered to supply her from his library.

Mrs. Maberidge was surprised at the length and animation of their conversation, and wondered if Florida really *was* so timid, after all. Mr. Deltrieve at length rose to go; his last words were:

"Depend upon it that you will see me very soon again."

These were *spoken* to Mrs. Maberidge, but the accompanying look was bent upon Florida.

"Why, child," exclaimed her aunt, casting a lingering look upon the horses, "you have really made a conquest! How well you look!"

The color deepened on Florida's cheek as she abruptly left the room; and, throwing herself on her couch, she murmured, "Oh! I am so happy!"

Dream on, poor child!—would that there were no waking!

## CHAPTER VIII.

ERNEST DELTRIEVE sat alone in his library. The dark evergreens around seemed to have cast their shadow on his heart, for he sat absorbed in his own thoughts, heedless of the soft, summer breeze that came wooingly in at the window. The bronze busts seemed gleaming sternly down upon him—rich mines of thought were slumbering on the shelves—but he sat as though he saw them not.

He was thinking of Florida. Sometime had passed since their first meeting, and an irresistible fascination drew him to Mrs. Maberidge's oftener than he was aware of. "This," thought he, "cannot go on so;" and then he asked himself if Florida were one whom he would choose to share his name and wealth. A vision of those gentle eyes bent lovingly upon him, and a soft hand clasping his arm would almost decide him; but then a thought of change and indifference—a remembrance of the *match-maker* rose up to mar his dream. Perhaps she had been instructed by her aunt; taught how to win his heart as the Cerberus that guarded the portal to his golden treasures.

He felt, perhaps, that he could win her when he chose—or rather, that she was already won and waiting for his offer. His experience of the world had made him distrustful, suspicious; he no longer felt confidence in any one, and imagined that every cup must be poisoned. Florida still dreamed on, like a happy child; in *her* eyes he was *perfect*, and she looked up and adored.

In the midst of his reverie, he cast his eyes from the window, where rose among the trees a lordly dwelling. He smiled as he thought of his first love. He *was poor* then; and perchance, if she could have foreseen his future wealth, she

would sooner have married him than the soulless block to whom she was chained. *She* had proved false; why should not others? *His* romance had long since crumbled to the dust; poor Florida was still in the full tide of her first rosy dream. He smiled as he called to mind Mrs. Maberidge's efforts to entangle him; her veil was so flimsy that he saw through it at once; and Florida's retiring modesty seemed still more beautiful in comparison.

It was a handsome picture, the cold, proud man in his troubled reverie; his dark, waving hair was thrust back from his forehead, and the noble features seemed perfect in their outline. Memory had carried him back to the days of early manhood. Again he was bending to catch the low tones of that well-remembered voice; again the flash of those bright eyes chained him to the spot; again a word or a look recalled his wavering allegiance. And she, all beauty and fascination—for even those bursts of petulance were charming, it was a pleasure to win back the smiles to that beautiful mouth—where was she now? Where was the day-dream that had colored his youth with its rosy tinge? Could he believe in such things now?

And yet a vision of happiness rose up before him. Florida, with her soft, girlish beauty, her gentle, loving heart was the star that gilded his existence, and smoothed away every thorn in his path; again love beamed upon him with its bewildering smiles, and he sat and pictured scenes for the future till he awoke to smile at his own imaginings.

Taking up a book which he had lately lent Florida, he looked for the pencillings he had requested her to make upon the passages that she most admired. Every glance gave fresh proof of a mind of no common order. Little she thought that the book was his—the composition of his lonely hours; and yet so it was. Ernest Deltrieve, the poet and accomplished author, now bent over his own writings with all the pleasure of a school girl. A paper fluttered among the leaves. He took it up, and saw his own verses copied out in a girlish, trembling hand that seemed unsteady from emotion.

A flush of gratified vanity rose to his pale cheek; and he read them as though for the first time. Florida could, then, appreciate his gems—she would look up to it as something beautiful and sublime; such a wife, meek and distrustful of her own powers, and blindly reverencing his, would gratify his ruling passion; and on the impulse of the moment, he seated himself at his writing-desk.

Already the paper was spread out before him—

already the ink was in his pen—a little time more, and Florida, poor, dreaming child! would have thought this world a Paradise. A step sounded close to his door; there was a low knock—and trembling, as though detected in a guilty act, Ernest Deltrieve hastily swept back his writing implements before giving the permission to enter. His servant man stood in the doorway—his carriage waited to convey him to the city.

Almost rejoicing in the interruption that had prevented him from committing himself, he quietly turned the key of his library, and soon after was whirling rapidly away from the scene of his momentary weakness. That day and that hour have since risen up before him, like the dreams in which one seems near heaven—near enough, almost, to see its glories, but an invisible influence draws you back forever.

## CHAPTER IX.

"FLORIDA!" exclaimed Mrs. Maberidge, as she looked up in surprise from the paper she was reading, "Mr. Deltrieve has sailed for Europe!"

She could not have heard aright—or it was some other name that her aunt had mistaken for his; the color had entirely left her cheek, and like some pale statue, she stood waiting for her aunt's next words.

"Very singular, to say the least of it," she continued, bending a scrutinizing glance upon her niece, "you certainly have not played your cards well—or, perhaps," said she, doubtfully, "you have been silly enough to refuse him."

Florida could bear no more. With a wild, appealing look, that haunted Mrs. Maberidge like an uncomfortable dream, she rushed to her own room, and pressed herself down firmly on the bed as though to prevent her heart from bursting. Poor, poor Florida! she was young in years, but she had dreamed away the sunshine of a life-time. Her belief in the world was gone; and when she awoke, it was to find a cheerless blank, in lieu of the flowers and sunshine.

The change had extended even to herself; she looked in the mirror and saw only a pale, sorrow-stricken girl, in place of the bright young dreamer—every vestige of joy had departed from that rigid face—her hair grew damp and lustreless—her eyes were heavy with their gathered tears—her mouth had ceased to smile—and the figure glided about in its mourning robes like a gloomy nun in her convent-prison.

She thought of Susan Douglas; and she seized the little, golden-clasped book, expecting that one draught at the healing fountain would restore

her to light and life. It was cold—dark—a dead language; there was nothing to still the tempest within; and the tears came raining down like summer showers as she again buried her face in the pillow.

She was lying in a tearful stupor; hours had passed since she entered the room; and she woke as if from a sleep, and wondered at the weight that rested on her heart. She sprang up lightly as before, and resolved to throw it off; but then came *memory*, and chained down her footsteps. She glanced from the window upon the cheerless lawn. An autumn storm was wailing among the trees; and the sad voice of the dying summer seemed like a spirit singing the requiem of her frozen heart. She gazed with a half smile upon the dreary landscape—it seemed to sympathize with her own feelings; and she counted the falling leaves, and thought that so had the brightness of her life been swept away by the winds of sorrow.

And yet, too, in the midst of her despair, the warm color came back as glowingly as before when she asked herself what right had she to indulge this grief? What claim had she upon Mr. Deltrieve? What reason was there to suppose that she had ever been more to him than any other stranger? She could repeat no words of his that confirmed the fact—and yet she had *felt* it. He had *looked* it, if he had not *spoken* it; and she remembered those glances which had seemed to breath such volumes of tenderness.

She opened some books, and gazed still fondly upon the pressed flowers which had once rested in *his* hand; *then* they were fresh and blooming like her own heart. She looked at the books which he had sent her; and found a sad consolation in recalling the words, and the look, and the tone with which they were given. Her memory was powerful, and like a moving panorama appeared the whole picture of that blissful dream.

"Would that I *could* forget," she thought; but the more she wished it, the more intense and vivid became each recollection. The warm color burned in her cheek; for although there were the flowers and books he had given her, and though deep in her heart were engraven those looks and tones that had lured her on to forgetfulness, yet *words* had been wanting; he had not committed himself, and might even smile at her folly. Life, she felt, could have no more potent misery than this; and again she sunk despairingly upon the couch.

Mrs. Maberidge knocked softly at the door, but, receiving no answer, she entered the room; and even *her* heart was touched by the young girl's utter despair. So pale and spiritless in

her grief that she seemed a weeping Niobe changed to stone. Her aunt had at first approached her with the conviction that *she* was the one who had been wronged, and that she was, at least, entitled to an explanation—supposing that Florida's emotions were only those of wounded vanity; but when she saw that the wound was in her *heart*, she pitied while she wondered.

She stood beside the bed for some time, scarcely knowing how to proceed, for her niece seemed unconscious of her presence; at length she said, "Is there anything I can do for you?"

"Nothing," was the reply, in a tone so hopeless, as though there was nothing in the world worth caring for.

"This is really foolish, Florida," said her aunt, "the man would have been a very good match—but he is not worth caring for; especially since he does not care for *you*."

"I thought that he *did* care for me," sobbed Florida.

"So did I," replied her aunt, "I was thinking how pleasant it would be to have you settled in that handsome place; but men are such slippery characters that it is perfectly ridiculous to care about them until after you are married—you are not sure of them till then."

Florida only sobbed afresh, apparently quite unconsoled by her aunt's philosophy; and Mrs. Maberidge continued:

"I would have more sense than to spoil my eyes for Mr. Deltrieve; there are plenty of other good matches in the world—and you do not know how soon you may be called upon to exercise your charms."

Florida felt her indignation rising, but she was too weak to give way to it; she resolved, however, that she would no longer be the object of such half contemptuous pity; and hastily bathing her eyes, she soon wiped away all traces of emotion.

"That looks like coming to your senses," said her aunt, approvingly, "now look your very best, for I expect some one to dinner."

When her aunt left the room, Florida would have sunk back again to her tears and despair; but pride kept her up; and while the canker was gnawing at her heart, outwardly she was pale and calm.

## CHAPTER X.

It was now late in the autumn. Henry Entworth had returned from Europe, and in consequence of the earnest solicitations of himself and his wife, Florida found herself an inmate of their establishment. She did not regret leaving her

aunt—there she had learned and suffered a painful lesson; and the place was connected with such melancholy recollections that she felt glad to leave it.

"Is she not pretty?" exclaimed Mrs. Henry Entworth, as she led Florida, smiling and blushing, to her husband.

"No," replied her uncle, as he bent his tall figure to gaze into her dark eyes, "not 'pretty'—that is not the proper term."

Florida's color deepened, but a half sigh accompanied the blush; she remembered the time when such words could make her heart beat wildly.

The drawing-room in which they were assembled was a splendid apartment; everything spoke of wealth and taste, and the soft, rich curtains that swept the ground with their heavy fringe, imparted an air of warmth and grandeur. Henry Entworth had married "a fortune;" his wife had no beauty—she was uncommonly plain-looking—but her wit was as sharp as steel, and this, tempered by a good disposition, made her a most entertaining companion. She had no children; and, interested by Florida's youth and girlish charms, seemed disposed to make a complete pet of her.

Though rather overcome, at times, by her aunt's exuberance of spirits, Florida appreciated her kindness, and felt more at home than she had done before. Her uncle was affectionate; and she had quite lost the feeling of dependance. There were some things, though, that could not be forgotten. Could a veil have been thrown over the past—blotting it out as completely as though it had never been—she might have felt happy; as it was, she experienced a sort of dreary inactivity—a listless indifference to everything around. Her aunt dragged her into company with her, loaded her with presents, and seemed determined to make her happy, after her own ideas of happiness; her uncle had long conversations with her, in which she could speak unreservedly of books, and feelings that Mrs. Maberidge would have laughed at; and yet she felt a void.

"Now," said her aunt, laughingly, as the door bell was vigorously pulled, "just please to discard that long face of yours and put on something a little brighter. Here comes one of the stiffest old bachelors in creation, and I wish you to make a conquest of him, just for the fun of the thing. Though, what you would do," she added, "after you had got him, is more than I can tell."

"Do?" replied her husband, merrily, "why, spend his five hundred thousand dollars, to be sure."

Florida smiled faintly, but her thoughts were with other things. "If they only knew," thought she; but then the color rose to her cheek as she felt inwardly thankful that they did *not* know.

"I am glad that I made you put on this crimson dress," whispered her aunt, "the warm glow lights up your complexion so prettily."

The discarded mourning robes would have been more in accordance with her feelings; and quite indifferently she returned the elaborate bow made her by Mr. Chatford, the rich bachelor.

The handsome dining-room was illuminated with wax candles—the heavy curtains excluded every breath of cold air—the table was loaded with silver, and cut-glass, and expensive viands. Mrs. Entworth's wit sparkled as brightly as the wine; Mr. Entworth was the polite, gentlemanly master of the house to perfection; and Mr. Chatford appeared to enjoy himself exceedingly.

Florida sat there like a timid, young school girl; her cheek pale, save where the crimson dress cast a glow upon it, and her eyes drooping beneath their long lashes. She had not yet looked at the visitor, and when she did glance up it was to find his eyes riveted upon her. The pale, sad young face had evidently fascinated him.

Mr. Chatford was about fifty years of age; tall, bony, and matter-of-fact-looking, he was as different as possible from her *beau-ideal*, and the girl scarcely bestowed a second glance upon him. Mrs. Entworth intercepted his furtive looks with considerable amusement; she could scarcely conceal her merriment.

Mr. Entworth now spoke of some poor family whom Mr. Chatford had assisted; and the visitor's embarrassment at this public mention of his good deeds attracted Florida's attention. She began to believe, almost against her will, that there were noble-hearted people in the world; and the lustrous glance which beamed upon the bachelor from the hitherto downcast eyes completed his enthralment.

"Poor Mr. Chatford!" said her uncle, laughing, as he came in from accompanying him to the door, "his lonely state is quite to be pitied. I asked him why he did not get married, and replied, so despondingly, that 'he was afraid no one would have him!' Can't you take pity upon him, Florida?"

"He is following the example of the Laird of Dumbiedikes," said Mrs. Entworth, "and trying to stare Florida into matrimony."

Florida felt uncomfortable and wished herself away. Her weary air was not lost upon her uncle, and he rose to hand her her bed-room candle.

"I may as well go, too," said his wife, "for I shall not find you very delightful company."

Florida found herself waylaid, and drawn into her aunt's dressing-room.

"This is comfort!" exclaimed Mrs. Entworth, as she sank into a luxurious arm-chair.

And "comfort" it certainly was. The spacious room was filled with all that could delight the eye; lace curtains drooped gracefully over the windows; the toilet-mirror was set in a frame of filigreed silver; and a cheerful coal fire blazed in the large grate—diffusing warmth and brightness all around.

"Well," observed her aunt, after a pause, in which she had been endeavoring to peruse Florida's face, "what do you think of Mr. Chatford?"

"I do not think anything at all of him," replied Florida, "except," she added, after a pause, "that he appears to be very charitable."

"Shall I tell you what *I* think?" continued Mrs. Entworth.

Her niece made no answer.

"I think that you might turn him as you pleased. That merino dress has done execution."

"Please do not talk so, aunt," said Florida, sadly, "I assure you that I never entertained such thoughts—and the idea of Mr. Chatford in the light you mention is extremely disagreeable to me."

"You are a queer child," said her aunt, "entirely different from other young girls."

"Perhaps I am," replied Florida, with a melancholy smile, "few girls are situated as I am."

"Poor child!" murmured Mrs. Entworth, as the door closed behind her, "she has no mother."

That one sentence is in itself a volume.

## CHAPTER XI.

THE days had glided on calmly enough, and Florida's heart almost recovered its youthful tone. Kindness had done much to heal her wounded spirit; and she had almost learned to look upon the past as a melancholy dream.

Before long, however, affairs began to change. A little while that home seemed almost as pleasant as earth could afford; and then came new troubles to mar her happiness. Mrs. Entworth's mother, a stern, haughty woman, with the most repulsive of manners, and the most impenetrable of hearts, came to take up her abode with her daughter; and poor Florida was soon deluded of her belief in permanent sunshine.

From the first, the young girl shrank from the

cold, piercing eye of Mrs. Dillings; it exercised a serpent-like influence upon her, and she feared it, though she knew not why. Every present which Florida received from her aunt was regarded by the mother as so much taken from herself; and she was at no pains to conceal her displeasure. She was continually speaking of dependants in the most contemptuous manner; and often would the poor girl seek her own room with burning cheeks, and a bursting heart; feeling that, if she were only fit, how gladly would she die, and leave a world that offered to her so few inducements to remain.

"I am surprised at you, Virginia!" exclaimed Mrs. Dillings, one day, "for being willing to harbor this needy, young adventurer. Adventurer she certainly is, and a pretty artful one, too, for she manages to blind you and Henry completely, and get all that she wants."

"But, mother," replied the gentler voice of Mrs. Entworth, "the poor child is an orphan, and so very sweet and gentle that it is a pleasure to have her with me. As to what we spend upon her it is not missed; and it is a real pleasure to me to have a young girl to dress."

"You need not go so far to find one," replied her mother, shortly, "there are your cousin Linden's daughters—any one of whom would be glad of the office."

"They are perfectly disgusting!" said Mrs. Entworth, "their flatteries and insincerity are so apparent that I really hate the sight of them. They are not in want, as Florida is—and I see no reason why I should take one of them to the neglect of so much more worthy a person."

"I never liked the girl," rejoined Mrs. Dillings, "and I think that the sooner she is out of the house the better."

Florida heard this conversation, and it stung her to the quick. Her first impulse was to gather up her clothes and leave the house at once; but then the question arose where could she go? Her uncle Glyman had left the city with his family; and all before her was an untrodden wilderness.

In the midst of these tumultuous feelings, a letter was placed in her hands that soon directed her thoughts another way. It was from Mr. Chatford; and it now rested with herself to continue a life of dependance, or become mistress of one of the most splendid establishments in the city. Her head was almost bewildered; and she sat crushing the letter in her hand, endeavoring in vain to collect her thoughts. Her brain seemed reeling; a sick, giddy feeling came over her, and she fell to the floor insensible.

Mrs. Entworth had entered the room; she read

the letter, and then gazed compassionately on Florida's pale, immovable features. She had recovered from her swoon; but a burning spot was on each cheek, and she was soon raving in all the wild delirium of fever. Gentle footsteps glided about the sick room, and nurse and doctor passed each other with solemn faces. Death hovered at the portal; but, disappointed of his prey, he passed on to desolate other hearth-stones. Youth and a good constitution triumphed; and the patient was soon pronounced convalescent.

A few weeks after, Florida sat thoughtfully in the grand drawing-room, where the immense mirrors reflected her figure until she grew weary of beholding it. Mrs. Entworth and Mrs. Maberidge were seated near her; and she listened wearily to her aunt's persuasions.

"I do think, Florida," exclaimed Mrs. Maberidge, "that you are the greatest fool in existence, if you refuse such an offer as this! I might have tried all my life-time without being able to get you such an establishment—and, now, when it comes in your way, you do not seem disposed to accept it!"

"I think," observed Mrs. Entworth, "that it is decidedly the best thing you can do. Mr. Chatford is by no means a disagreeable man, and you can probably have your own way in everything. Still, I advise you to consult your own inclinations entirely."

"An excellent recommendation for a husband," thought Florida, "that he is by no means a disagreeable man!"

"There he is now!" exclaimed Mrs. Maberidge, as a ring at the front door bell caused her to start from her seat. "Now, Florida, don't make a fool of yourself, I beg!"

The ladies left the apartment; and Florida passively awaited the entrance of Mr. Chatford. What passed during the interview her aunts were not informed; but they easily ascertained that it was not a very long one.

Florida was not visible until dinner time, and when she made her appearance at the table, nothing was said on the subject; but Mrs. Entworth's quick eyes soon caught the glitter of a heavy diamond circlet on one of Florida's slender fingers, from which she drew her own conclusions.

"And so," exclaimed her uncle, one evening, "our little Florida is really going to be married?"

A beautiful color glowed in her cheek at this address; but the accompanying smile was a melancholy one. Mr. Entworth was not exactly satisfied with the expression of her countenance—his scrutinizing glance increased Florida's confusion.

"Tell me, darling," he whispered, "are you quite satisfied with this marriage? If not, I will get you off, yet—you shall not be married against your will."

"I am quite satisfied, uncle," she replied, faintly.

"You are very young yet, Florida," continued her uncle, half doubtingly.

"I am nineteen," she answered, as though she had already lived a life-time.

"And Mr. Chatford is *fifty*. Are you not afraid, Florida, of yet meeting with some one whom you will like better? Of falling in love after you are married?"

A beautiful, surprised look was on her face; and a half contemptuous smile curled her lip as she firmly answered, "No." *Love!*—the very name was a thing to laugh at.

"Stop that mysterious whispering!" exclaimed her aunt, "and come to me—I want you to try on these pearls."

Florida meekly bent her head while the magnificent wedding present was twisted in her soft brown hair, clasped around her neck, and bound upon the scarcely less white arms.

"There is a wedding over the way," said the tenants of the opposite house.

"Quick! quick!" exclaimed a little girl, the youngest of the party, "there comes the bride!—isn't she beautiful? What a splendid veil!"

"Yes," observed a gentleman, indifferently, "it is Henry Entworth's niece—a girl without a cent—whom Chatford, the millionaire, fell in love with."

"Where's the bridegroom?" inquired the little girl.

"There he is—don't you see that gentleman with her?"

"*That!*" she exclaimed, in a tone of disappointment, "I thought that was her father! Why does she marry that old man?"

The young ladies called her a silly child, and the gentlemen laughed; but now they all left the window—for Florida had entered the carriage—the door was closed—and nothing now remained to be seen.

## CHAPTER XII.

A *SPLENDID*, rather gloomy-looking house, magnificently furnished, was occupied by a solitary couple, almost lost in immensity—alone, with the exception of servants. A great many envied Florida—looked up at the house with longing admiration—and wondered if the time would ever come when they could call such an one their own.

Let us look in upon the two in their lonely grandeur. The spacious rooms are enriched with all that money can procure, or taste devise; and the rays from splendid chandeliers fall on couches of crimson and gold, and mirrors, and pictures, and linger there like a child bewildered with a multitude of toys.

On one of the sofas Florida leans in a weary, half reclining position, playing with the sparkling rings on her fingers, or glancing indifferently at the rich folds of her dress, that glow beneath the light in one deep crimson sheen. It is Mr. Chatford's favorite color—perhaps in remembrance of the day when he first saw her.

The master of the house is seated at a table, busy with drawings and designs. His face wears a look of care as he bends over his papers; his wealth is a source of never-ceasing trouble. How to invest his money to the best advantage—how to obtain the largest returns for sums lent out, are the subjects that occupy his mind.

Florida sits and dreams, not of the future, but of the past; and wakes and wonders to find herself there, and thinks that she must be dreaming still. She feels almost alone in the world—with no relative, who can be termed such, except her husband. Since her marriage she has received a letter from her father, in which he congratulated her upon her choice, and appeared extremely well pleased to have her off his hands. Her happiness in the marriage was evidently with him a matter of very little consideration.

She could not complain of Mr. Chatford; he was kind and attentive, proud of his young wife, and lavish, to her, at least, of his money and presents. The rich and influential courted her society; the intellectual and refined appeared suddenly alive to her merits; the poor and needy blessed her, for she was ever kind and charitable. And yet she sometimes wondered why people were born.

"Florida," said Mr. Chatford, "I want you to look at these designs."

Languidly she rose from her sofa and approached the table. She never could feel interested in his imaginary blocks of houses, and listened wearily to his descriptions and suggested improvements.

"Why, in twenty-five years," exclaimed her husband, in delight, "these houses would fairly treble their cost! Property is rising there every day."

Florida smiled an assent to his inquiring look, and stood playing with the tassel of the table-cover.

"I shall put them in *your* name, dearest," he continued, "and some years hence, when you are

a gay, young widow, you will be the Croesus of the community."

"I shall never be a *gay* widow," replied Florida, "and I may not survive you. People die daily who are younger than I."

"Nonsense!" said Mr. Chatford, "of course you will be a widow; and a *young* one, at least, if not a *gay* one."

His voice trembled with natural feelings, and the tears came into Florida's eyes. She felt, as people often will feel, a consciousness of her deficiencies in the line of duty, and a wish to be better.

"Look at this, Florida," continued her husband, as he handed her a paper tied with red tape, "I have been doing this to-day."

It was his will; and when Florida read it, in obedience to his request, she found that, at his death, she would become the entire possessor of his almost countless thousands.

"You are too good," said she, "too kind. I do not deserve it—and a much less sum than this would suffice for my wants."

"I have no one to leave it to but you," said he, with a smile, "you shall do with it as you choose."

The conversation had imparted a still more gloomy tinge to Florida's feelings; and she went back to her sofa in silence. Mr. Chatford endeavored to amuse her with the evening papers.

"Married, on the 20th inst., Gilbert Weathersfield, Esq., to Miss Susan Douglas."

"Why, how is this!" exclaimed Mr. Chatford, "I thought he had just lost his wife?"

"She has been dead about a year," replied Florida.

A remembrance of the nun-like life to which her fancy had consigned Susan Douglas, on hearing the recital of her lover's perfidy, crossed her mind, and almost raised a smile at the fallacy of her own conclusions. It seemed but yesterday that she had listened to Susan's story, and admired the strength of mind that cast off forever the recreant lover; and now, at the first opportunity, pride, indignation, all were forgotten, and she was smiling on the very man who had once deserted her. The more Florida saw of the world, the more she was disposed to wonder at it.

Mr. Chatford was all this while occupied with "passengers from Liverpool."

"Ernest Deltrieve and servant," he read, "*Deltrieve?* It must be the same one. A tight fellow, that, in making a bargain—not very easy to outwit him."

"But was he really stingy?" asked Florida, still unconsciously clinging to her first impressions,

"I should think that a person like him would go about doing all the good he could, with his money."

Her husband at first surveyed her in a kind of blank surprise. Then, he laughed outright.

"Why, Florida!" he exclaimed, "you are as silly as a school girl! Such ideas have, probably, never entered his head; and if they did, he would not act them out. No, indeed! he looks after his money too closely for that!"

Florida woke to find that she had been worshipping an idol made of clay—decked only in the trappings of her bright imaginings.

### CHAPTER XIII.

"You want a change, darling," said Mrs. Henry Entworth, as she gazed compassionately upon Florida's pale, languid face, that looked still whiter from the contrast afforded by her deep mourning, "Mr. Chatford's death has completely prostrated your energies; but it is not right that a wealthy, young widow like you should give up so entirely. This same old scene makes you melancholy—you must go with us to Europe."

To Europe accordingly they went; and Florida's heart lost something of its heaviness amid the new and varying scenes through which they passed. It was impossible to feel such a heavy load of sadness while gazing on the beautiful Rhine, or to think of every-day sorrows in the solemn aisles of Westminster Abbey. Mr. Chatford's death had left her lonely—a loneliness which his money could not overcome; and this constant passing from scene to scene brought momentary forgetfulness of the void within.

They remained abroad for sometime; and when they returned, the improvement in Florida was a theme of wonder to all who knew her. She had looked into her own heart—she had examined her feelings—and became convinced that life was not given to waste in a mere empty dream. Her girlish figure had acquired dignity; her face a calm, serious expression; and the treasures of her richly-stored mind astonished with their brilliancy and depth of thought.

Such was she when Ernest Deltrieve again beheld her. Five years had elapsed since their first meeting. Then, she was a young, timid girl, poor and undistinguished; now, she was a wealthy widow, whose society was everywhere courted, and whose charms, independently of her golden ones, would have gained her the attention of any community. Often, in his travels, the remembrance of that enthusiastic, young face, with its love-beaming eyes, had haunted him

unpleasantly; and the question had more than once arisen in his mind whether he had not thrown away happiness that was just within his grasp.

She was now wealthy and distinguished; he should gain, instead of losing, by linking his name with her's; and under the influence of these feelings, he approached her as an old friend—fully prepared for embarrassment that would only endear her in his eyes.

His vanity was wounded by her perfect self-possession; the time was past when the name of Ernest Deltrieve could arouse emotions, and she received him with a quiet indifference. Somewhat mortified, he thought the whole scene over on his return home: and was more than half persuaded that the indifference had been assumed to hide the intensity of her real feelings.

Under this impression, and impelled by his own involuntary admiration, he seated himself at his desk to write the very letter he had nearly written five years ago. Had he *then* written it, the whole current of Florida's life would have been changed; perhaps, though, not for the better. *Then* it would have been a very easy matter for him—secure that her girlish admiration could see in him nothing that was not *perfect*; *now* his doubts caused corrections and repetitions; and it was with a trembling hand that he, at length, sealed the letter.

And yet he thought that she could not be indifferent to his representations. He had spoken of his love of five years before, now strengthened and improved; and he hoped to find some answering echo in her own heart. He was restless, after he had despatched it, until her answer was received; and then, impatiently tearing it open, he read:

"I do not hesitate to say that, had your letter been written *five years ago*, my answer would have been very different. *Then*, I saw only with the dreaming eyes of inexperienced girlhood; *now*, years have revealed much to which I had rather still be blind. *Then*, I believed in perfection—it seemed to me a thing composed of looks, and smiles, and fair words; *now*, I have learned to look at *deeds*.

"But you, too, speak of '*five years ago*'—of 'love that you then experienced, now strengthened and increased.' Your words have brought a smile where smiles are not now as common as they once were. Could *love* have waited *five years* for time to improve its flavor? and *is* love always improved by *time*? Is not love that waits to be *increased* more like a burning taper, that, having reached its end, expires in darkness? You are deluding yourself with vain phantasies—

and now let me undeceive you. You do not experience for me the love that you profess—I have not so much to awaken *love* as I had five years ago; I was then young and hopeful, and enthusiasm is more attractive than a cold serenity. You find me ‘altered and improved,’ you say—the improvement is *five hundred thousand dollars*. I cannot forget this, if I would—the fact is constantly forced upon me by others, as well as yourself; and I can only say that I write my refusal more willingly, because I believe that it will inflict no deeper wound upon you than that of a temporary disappointment.”

Florida had written bitterly, perhaps; but all the contempt she felt in her heart for such love as that just offered to her acceptance remained unexpressed.

Ernest Deltrieve sat reading the letter over and over again, as though unable to believe his own senses. But when he, at length, comprehended that he had been proudly and coldly refused, his conscience murmured:

“I have deserved it!”

#### CHAPTER XIV.

THE hollow bustle of the city seemed ever singing, in a voice of melancholy sadness, the dirge of the Past; and Florida turned from it with a weary heart. Her wealth left her at liberty to select her own residence; and a pretty, quiet village, that lay, like an unseen jewel, on the bosom of earth, shut in by its trees and its hills, was chosen as a retreat.

Here she resolved always to live—alone, but not lonely; the communing of her own heart, the companionship of books, her visits to the poor and lowly, with whom she could divide her overflowing wealth—these would abundantly lighten her solitude. Those around her were only simple farmers, and they did not annoy her with visits of prying curiosity; they saw the lady, quiet and sad, clinging to her voluntary imprisonment, and they forbore to disturb her.

Florida had now become accustomed to her nun-like life; she scarcely remembered that there *could* be any other—and busied herself with her flowers and books, in quiet indifference to the world without. But she was yet young; and sometimes, perhaps, as she gazed upon the moonlight, and felt oppressed by a sense of loneliness, she thought of what life *might* be with one in whom she could confide; or when the summer wind came laden with a shower of blossoms, it seemed to bring upon its wings her youthful dream; and she sighed to think that it was past.

The only time that she emerged from her

solitary dwelling was on the Sabbath. The simple village church, with its air of quiet reverence, had become beautiful in her eyes; and she listened, unconsciously fascinated by the deep tones of the voice that Sabbath after Sabbath gave forth the holy imaginings of a mind that ever turned heavenward.

At first, the voice, like a strain of sweet, yet melancholy music, had attracted her in itself, without bringing a thought of anything beyond; her own trials were then too fresh in her mind to be interested in things around her: but the pleasant tones soothed her weary spirit—lulling her, like a tired child, to sleep to all the rest.

But gradually she came to look upon the features of the speaker, and they interested her. The face was pale, and melancholy in its expression—the dark hair threaded with silver—and, except the eyes, there was no indication in the appearance of the minister of those powers which riveted his listener in almost breathless attention. Those wonderful eyes! What a depth of expression spoke in their concentrated glance.

Florida would return home and weep, she knew not why; those images of heaven rose in their calm beauty before her, and she knelt to pray, and rose to mourn her own insensibility.

The minister had observed his wrapt listener; her earnest attention could not escape his notice; and the gentle face, with its upraised eyes, was often pictured before him as he sat alone in his study. She was a stranger, and it was his duty to visit her; why did he shrink from that first call?

He was poor and unfriended, with nothing save his own talents to depend on—*she* was a wealthy widow; and yet, as he passed up the gravelled walk in front of her mansion, thoughts and feelings, which he dared not acknowledge, crowded into his mind, and caused his hand to tremble when he rang for admittance.

Florida's voice, too, spoke of emotion; there was a certain degree of awe connected with the pleasure of her visitor's presence, and she scarcely trusted herself to speak. But again those deep tones fell upon her ear; again that voice was breathing forth beautiful thoughts; and, unconsciously, she listened with the same wrapt attention.

Neither felt calmer after that visit; the minister locked himself up in his study and prayed for strength; and Florida gazed, that evening, upon the moonlight with something of the old feelings of her girlhood.

The next Sabbath the minister's eyes were irresistibly drawn toward his most attentive listener, whose soul-speaking eyes were upraised to

him as if by a spell; the next week the minister's feet were irresistibly drawn to the iron gate, beyond which lay his earthly elysium. He struggled with his feelings, but in vain; like a smothered flame, they only burst forth the stronger; and with a sensation almost of delight, he listened to the report, which Florida herself, perhaps, had carefully spread, that, in the event of her marrying again, the immense wealth of which she held possession would pass to another. Perhaps she wished to try him; experience had made her cautious.

The minister's step was more elastic, now, as he entered the trellised porch; and two happy beings sat in the quiet parlor, hand clasped in

hand—for thus were they to continue their pilgrimage.

It was a proud and happy moment for Florida when she placed in her husband's hands the possession of almost countless wealth. The smiles of olden time illuminated her face as she watched his surprise, and heard his exclamations of astonishment. The fetters to his genius were removed; a wider field was opened to his talents; and he folded her to his heart with a blessing.

She was proud to be hailed as the minister's wife; proud in the love of a venerated husband; and meekly grateful that she had awoke from her dream to a blissful reality.

## THE BRIDAL.

### AN OLD MAID'S STORY.

BY A. L. OTIS.

Ours was a great family for festival days, and anniversaries. Christmas, New Year's day, and Thanksgiving, were all kept; and no birth-day, wedding day, or holy-day of any kind, was allowed to escape without notice.

What gay rogues we were, I and my brothers and sisters—how glad of an excuse for a frolic!

Accordingly one merry Christmas day had been celebrated with all due festivities—with romps, and games, and presents. Toward nightfall, when we were all beginning to be tired of so much noise and gaiety, my sister Sophy suddenly exclaimed,

"Let us go to aunt Julia's room, and sit by her wood fire."

"No," said I, "you forget—this is aunt Julia's day for dressing up in her funny old white dress, and mamma will not have her disturbed. Beside I am always afraid of her on *this* night."

"Afraid," cried brother Fred, "who's afraid of an old silk gown? Come on, all of you, I'll lead the way!" and up stairs to aunt Julia's room he stalked, and Sophy, Charles, little Lucy, and I, timidly followed him. Fred knocked, but hearing no reply, boldly turned the latch and walked in; the rest of us crept on tip-toe over the threshold after him. But none of us presumed to stir a step farther—we were struck by what we saw.

By her bedside knelt our aunt Julia's tall and slender figure, looking ghost-like in a long white satin robe, made in a strange ancient fashion. It was a garment of rich fabric, and with its short waist, and sleeves, seemed such as would have befitted some young bride of by-gone times; but it looked strangely out of place on the form of our pale, sad aunt, whose usual, and familiar dress almost resembled a widow's weeds. A necklace, and bracelets of pearls encircled a neck and arms whose faultless form, and still lingering beauty, betrayed what must have been their loveliness in the days of youth.

The noise of our coming caused her to rise from her kneeling posture, and, turning, she revealed to us a face bathed in tears. The deep sorrow of her countenance awed and impressed us; we turned with one accord to leave the room, but she held out her hand to us, saying,

"Come in, children; you have never feared or shunned me, and shall not, even on this day.

Come in, and sit by my fire; your gay company will cheer me."

"Dear aunt Julia," cried little Lucy, springing into her arms, "why are you so sad? and why do you always wear that queer frock on Christmas day?"

Aunt Julia hid her face in her hands for a moment, and then, raising her head, said gently,

"Would you like to know why, children?"

We replied by an eager assent.

Aunt Julia seated herself in her low arm-chair by the fire-side, and, taking little Lucy in her lap, made us sit down quietly near her, and then, after a pause, began.

"It is a very sad story I am going to tell you, children; did I not know that I am about to leave you soon, I would not cloud your gay Christmas, but delay telling you my mournful history till your older hearts could better bear to hear of grief and suffering. Yet after all, sorrows fall lighter on young hearts, and leave less trace there than on older ones; and, I wish to know that you understand me before I die, that I may be sure you will sometimes think with pitying love of your poor aunt Julia when she is gone.

"Your mother and myself were the only children of a clergyman who resided in the country near Philadelphia. Our mother died early, but our childhood passed in unclouded happiness. Our father bestowed the utmost pains on our education; we both excelled in many pleasing accomplishments, and as we grew older, we gradually drew round us a delightful circle of friends. I was the youngest, but at eighteen I had already found many admirers; nor were flatterers wanting to tell me of my personal advantages.

"About that time a young gentleman from England called at our house, having letters to my father. He was a young man of fortune, who had come to the United States, not on a flying trip, but with the intention of becoming thoroughly acquainted with our country, by a residence of some years in it. At the time I first saw him he was residing in Philadelphia; but finding himself cordially welcomed to our happy home whenever he came, his visits became very frequent, and much of his time was spent with us.

"He was possessed of great manly beauty, and

though very young, being not more than twenty-two, his cultured mind was older than his years. As he gravely conversed with my father, of European politics, or American institutions, I sat apart and listened. I wondered at the knowledge and depth of thought the young politician displayed. I glowed with his eloquence—I revelled in his wit. Day by day I understood better the deep hidden enthusiasm of his reserved nature—his earnest longings for freedom—for truth—for goodness. In short, ere I had reason to believe he had cast a thought on me, I had penetrated into his most secret feelings—his innermost heart; understood—revered—admired—loved him.

"I could not disguise my feelings from myself—I fancy no woman who *really* loves can, (spite of what novels say to the contrary)—but I was ashamed, and mortified at my discovery, and resolved no human being should ever guess it. With stern self-discipline I forbade myself the pleasure of his converse; and as often as possible made excuses to absent myself from the room during his visits.

"One afternoon, having, in pursuance of my new line of conduct, left him alone with my father, I found myself unable to command the nervous restlessness I felt while in the house, and strolling forth, I took my way toward a favorite little brookside corner which I loved. On reaching it, tempted to self-indulgence by the perfect solitude of the scene, I throw myself on the mossy ground and wept bitterly—it was so very hard for me to obey my own mandates.

"I know not how long I had thus remained absorbed in my grief, when I was aroused by a step close beside me. I looked up hurriedly, and saw Clarence standing with folded arms before me. His attitude was stern, but the expression on his features I dared not interpret.

"Confused and agitated, I turned my face from his earnest gaze. I feared lest he should read my soul—ah! he had already done so.

"The next moments were the happiest of my life.

"To you, children as you are, it would be vain, to speak of the blissful emotions, which filled my soul, when I heard from the noble being I had so hopelessly loved, that his heart had long been mine—that in silence—for his proud and reserved nature ever concealed its deepest feelings—he had observed me, weighed my qualities, and finding in me all his heart required, he had yielded me, as he said, 'the deepest and strongest love man ever gave to woman.' He told me, too, that ere joining me that blessed afternoon, he had already spoken to my father and won his consent to sue for his daughter's hand.

"Oh, how happy I was—how happy I was—why could not those blissful days last? Why was I doomed to encounter *that* terrible hour!—this gloomy future!"

Poor aunt Julia paused, and her tears fell like rain on her white satin gown, and on the little sleeping Lucy's golden hair. We wept, too, and pressed close to our gentle, sorrowing aunt; she resumed—

"Our engagement was a short one, for Clarence had received letters requiring his return to England, and he demanded the right to take me with him. It was the last of October when he first spoke to me of love—Christmas day was appointed for our marriage. My preparations were necessarily hurried, but they were completed, and the wedding day arrived.

"My dear father was to perform the ceremony, and my sister was to be my bride's-maid; our little parlors were gaily decked with flowers; the guests were assembled, all was ready, but Clarence had not come.

"I had not seen him the day before, as was usual; but supposing that some important business connected with his speedy departure for Europe had detained him in the city, I felt no anxiety.

"The bridal hour arrived; the guests waited below; I sat in my room, robed as you see me now, (these pearls were his gift for the occasion) but Clarence did not come. A visible consternation was beginning to be apparent on the faces of all around me. I never thought for a moment to doubt my Clarence—thank God, I never doubted him—but I felt that something was wrong; a dread of some terrible calamity oppressed me, and I was nearly fainting, when a sudden sharp ring of the door bell aroused me.

"If that is a messenger, bring him here at once," I said.

"In a moment more, a physician from the city stood before me—in another, my impetuous questions had wrested the whole truth from him.

"Clarence had been attacked the day before by a violent malignant fever, caught probably on the wharf, whither he had been several times to make arrangements for our voyage. He was now dangerously, almost hopelessly ill.

"Without a word or an instant's delay, I flew down stairs, and stepped into the carriage which waited at the door; the doctor followed. A half an hour of intolerable agony brought me to Clarence's apartment.

"I flew to his bedside—I took him in my arms, I laid his fevered head on my bosom, and then for the first time I wept.

"He knew me, my poor Clarence, and I saw

his eyes rest on my bridal garments, but he could not speak. At first I was brave and hopeful—alas! in a few hours more I was, or *seemed*, brave still, but hopeless.

"Let me pass over those moments of despairing misery; enough that ere night I held in my arms the lifeless form of him I had more than loved—adored.

"A moment before he died, recovering his voice and consciousness, he took my hand, and with his last strength placed this ring on my finger, saying,

"My wife—our wedding day—be true to me—I should have been so to you—we shall meet—"

"It was over; but a merciful unconsciousness which fell upon me, veiled my sorrow from me during the severe illness with which I was attacked. When I began to recover my memory with recovering health, a dangerous fainting fit followed each successful effort to recall the dreadful past. My intellect gave way under my sufferings, and for several years I was an inmate of a lunatic asylum.

"Time, however, restored me to sanity, and partial health. My sister, your dear mother, having meanwhile married happily, took me into her peaceful home, and by her tender love and care sought to impart strength and calmness to my troubled spirit. Her gentle ministrations have in part succeeded, but no art has ever sufficed to remove the deep sadness which then settled on my soul. My health, as you know, has ever been delicate, but death has been long in coming to restore me what I lost. Yet during all these long years that I have waited, I have been his true and faithful wife; yes, that death-bed was our bridal; I wedded him there, not for life, but death—not for this world, but the next."

Again aunt Julia paused, she seemed absorbed in thought—a beautiful enthusiasm glowed on her face; her eyes had a strange look of inspiration in them, such as we had never seen before. Her cheeks, usually so pale, were flushed with a brilliant color; she seemed to have recalled her youth and beauty by that recital of the past.

After a short time she broke from her reverie, and again spoke—

"Dear children, my story is done. It has cost me some pain to tell it, but I am rewarded by knowing, that henceforth you will better under-

stand your poor aunt Julia, and her queer ways, at which you have, perhaps, sometimes laughed. You know now, why, ever on this sad anniversary, I dedicate the day to prayers and tears—assume my wedding robes, renew my wedding vows, and consecrate myself anew to him."

We crowded weeping round our beloved aunt as her voice ceased; we embraced and tried to comfort her. She seemed greatly moved and excited; her breathing was short, and her color went and came. Suddenly she pressed her hand on her heart, as though she felt a spasm there, and she motioned us to remove little Lucy.

As we did so, she rose from her chair, and stood erect to her full, noble height.

"God bless you, my beloved children," she said, solemnly; "rejoice with me when I tell you my time is nearly come—yes, nearer than I thought."

She turned her face upward—her eyes were raised and fixed; her whole countenance and figure had a look preternatural, almost sublime. We children gazed at her awe-struck, wondering what she was about to do.

Suddenly she stretched her arms upward, saying in a thrilling voice of joy,

"At last—husband—at last—our wedding day has come."

Her eyes closed, and she would have fallen backward had not my brother Fred and I caught her in our arms. Greatly alarmed, we called for help, and pressed round her seeking to revive her. It was long ere we could believe that our dear aunt Julia had indeed left us forever.

Great was the sorrow and consternation in our house that Christmas night. And children though we were, we mourned more deeply to think that the tender and noble heart which had now ceased to beat, had never till that night been fully appreciated. Oh, if we could but have recalled her long enough to show her how much love and reverence we felt for one whose sorrows had been so deep—whose fidelity so unswerving. Alas! for the vanity of such wishes!

Our mother, with tender sympathy, which made her divine what would have been aunt Julia's wishes, caused her to be arrayed for the grave in those same bridal robes—her wedding ring unre-moved from her finger, and laid her beside him to whom she had been so constant over.

## THE FISHERMAN'S HAT.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "THE VALLEY FARM," "DORA ATHERTON," &amp;C.

THE awful winter of 18— was very similar to that which has just passed. The newspapers were filled with tales of shipwreck and loss of life, the consequences of the terrible tempests which swept the ocean.

It was toward the close of the winter, one morning, that a little child toddled toward a wild bench, in one of the sea-beaten states of New England. The sky was dark and lowering, for the storm, which had shook the cabin all night, had not yet entirely blown away. The waves thundered on the rocky promontory within sight, throwing their spray often clear over it; and surged and resurged, in tumultuous flow, up and down the narrow strip of sand that afforded a landing spot in the little bay before the fisherman's cabin.

A superb Newfoundland dog accompanied the child, now frolicking around it; now scampering gaily away, and now returning again to its little charge. Suddenly the child paused in mixed wonder and terror, for the receding wave had just brought to its feet, a large felt hat, which seemed even to its almost infant mind, not totally strange. The dog also, on perceiving the hat, drew back, uttering a low whine.

It was at this crisis that the mother, in the neighboring cabin, first missed her child. She had left the boy, a few minutes before, sitting on the floor and playing with the Newfoundland. But happening now to look up from her work, she gave a slight scream to see the child missing, and rushing to the door heard simultaneously the melancholy whine of the dog. As the spot, to which her little one had gone, was invisible from where she stood, the worst apprehensions took possession of her, and she rushed frantically toward the shore, shrieking, "my child, my child, oh! God, is my child to be lost too."

For, in truth, she had been all the morning, in

a state bordering on distraction. Her husband, who was a fisherman, had been absent for two days, a period far longer than he had intended: and the frightful gale, which had raged for the last twenty-four hours, rendered the cause of this delay only too clear. During the preceding night she had not slept a moment; indeed had not even undergone the mockery of going to bed; but keeping a light burning at a window that could be seen out at sea, had watched and prayed through all the weary hours. Often, in the momentary lulls of the gale, she had cheated herself into the fancy that she heard the hallo of her husband: and more than once had actually flown to the door to admit him. But when morning broke at last, without bringing him, she had given up the hope of ever seeing him again. "He will never, never come back," she said. "If his boat had lived, he would have been here before this." As she thus spoke, her child, woke by her heart-broken accents, began to cry. She snatched it from its cradle, covered it with kisses, and bursting into tears, sobbed, "poor orphan, you have no one but mother now, no one else, no one else."

When she missed her child, therefore, and heard the melancholy whine of the dog, the conviction flashed across her that the little one had wandered to the beach, and been carried away by a breaker. So, with the shriek, and exclamation we have described, she rushed to the shore.

It took but a moment to traverse the space between her and the water, and to catch the boy in her arms. It was not until she had done this, that she perceived the water-soaked hat at her feet, at which the dog was now gazing, with a low cry of grief and recognition.

She almost let the child fall. Indeed, only the instinct of the mother saved the boy, for she

sank at once on the wet sand, with a groan, her eyes fixed, in a glassy stare, on the hat, and on a bit of a boat's mast and sail, that had been washed up with it. For well she knew the battered hat to be her husband's, the very hat which she herself had placed on his head, two days before, when he bade her farewell.

Sense and feeling left her, indeed, for a while. How long she lay there, she never knew. But she was roused, at last, by the cry of her child, and recovered to find the dog pulling at her dress, for the advancing tide was almost at her feet. She rose, and, taking up the hat reverently, moved slowly toward the cottage.

The day wore on. The sun finally succeeded in breaking through the clouds, and all without doors was bright: but nothing brought comfort to the heart of the widow. Seated in a low rocking-chair, she remained, for hours, in a state of stupor, from which she was only aroused by the cries of her child, when the little one woke from its slumbers. Or, with the boy in her arms, she would pace the cabin floor, murmuring wild words to soothe him to sleep. Occasionally she would pause, and look out of the window. But she saw not the golden sunshine, nor the bright waters: all seemed to her black; for the blank despair of her heart communicated its own hue to everything in Nature.

The cottage was situated nearly a mile from any other human habitation, and therefore it is no wonder that, for hours, she was alone. But a little village lay on a larger bay, around the promontory, and as her husband was in the habit of visiting it frequently, she began to think, as night fell, that it was singular his long absence was unnoticed, and that no one had come to inquire what was the matter. At this thought, which increased her feeling of loneliness and despair, she sat down, and began rocking herself to and fro, weeping wildly, and apostrophizing by turns her dead husband, and the child she held on her lap, and who gazed up at her, in terrified silence, with his large blue wandering eyes.

"Oh!" she sobbed, "if I had but known it was the last time I was to see him. Father Almighty," and she raised her face, in agonized pleading, to heaven, "give him back to me but for an hour—only for one hour! Or, if that cannot be, let me see his dear face, even though in death." Here a gust of weeping, that shook her figure as a hurricane shakes a tree, convulsed her for a while. When it had passed, she addressed her child, but in the same frantic strain. "Poor orphaned one," she said, gazing sadly at him, "you will never know what a father

is. But you will recall to me," she added, straining him to her breast, "that father; for you have his eyes, bless God for that! Oh! darling, darling, you are the only comfort left me. If it was not for you, I should pray to die. But I must live to take care of you, dear, dear little orphan." And she almost smothered it with wild kisses.

Lost in this, her first grief, she had not observed that somebody from the village was at last approaching. As she spoke these last words, the visitor had even gained the cottage door, and his broad shadow fell directly across her, though without her being aware of his presence. But the child, looking over his mother's shoulder, beheld the intruder; and his face instantly lost its half wondering, half terrified expression: while he stretched his little arms out, and springing up, began to crow gleefully. Simultaneously the dog, which had been slumbering on the hearth, started up as if some mysterious influence had roused him, and with a joyful bark, sprang, at one bound, upon the intruder.

"Down, Carlo, down," cried a cheerful, manly voice. "Ah! Johnny, you know father, do you? Why, Hetty, dearest," added the speaker, as the startled woman sprang up with a shriek, drawing her into his arms, "you didn't think I was lost, did you? There, don't look at me as if I was a ghost—you frighten me—I came near being one, I know. Why, I declare, if she hasn't gone off into a dead faint."

It was, indeed, as he said. After one long, almost incredulous gaze into her husband's face, her nerves, so long strained to their utmost tension, gave way, and she would have fallen to the floor if his stout arm had not fortunately supported her.

An hour later, while the wife bustled about to prepare supper, the husband, holding the child in his arms, told how he had been rescued. It was a broken story, it is true, for sometimes the crowing of the child, who seemed beside himself with delight, interrupted the narrator, and sometimes the tearful questions of the wife as she paused in her labors.

"You see," he said, "when the craft was capsized, I thought all was over: and, as I went down, my last thought, Hetty, was on you and the boy." Here his voice grew husky. But clearing it, with a brave effort, he went on. "I came up, at last, however, and the first thing I saw was an oar, which I clutched. And now I began to have some hope of life. I had been making for the bay, carrying everything I dared, when I went over: and I knew, though the night was the darkest I ever saw, that I couldn't be far at sea. At last, after fighting for an hour with

the waves, I saw a light looming up ahead. I halloed, again, and then again. The third time I was answered. The light now came down toward me, and I saw a fishing smack, immediately, shoot out of the gloom."

After a moment, he resumed. "Well—there, don't cry, Hetty—I was soon on board. The smack made port, at her harbor, some dozen miles down the coast, this morning; and I came home as fast as possible, fearing you might be alarmed. But I little thought that the tide had swept my hat, and part of my poor old craft, to

my own door. It was no wonder you believed me lost."

What a contrast was that happy night at the cottage, to the one which had preceded it. To this day, though many years have passed, its anniversary is celebrated religiously. And the tears of the wife still fall, as the husband, at evening worship, returns thanks for the mercy which once saved him from "the deep waters," or begs that He, "who holds the waters in the hollow of His hand," will succor those "who go down to the sea in ships."

## MARGARET NESBITT'S STRATAGEM;

### OR, A NEW LOVE TEST.

BY E. W. DEWEES.

Pretty Margaret Nesbitt had two unexceptionable lovers, and sadly puzzled was she to choose between them—at least so she pretended, as she gravely debated their respective merits, with her cousin and confidant, Phoebe Field. Certainly if she had a preference, she kept her secret well guarded.

A tall, handsome girl was Margaret—well formed and graceful. Full of mischief and spirit, she delighted in a frolic or a jest, and some there were, who, judging her merely by some of the mad freaks in which she had been engaged, held her to be but a thoughtless, giddy girl. Yet the friends who knew her best, discovered beneath her merry humor, a fund of plain, good sense, and true feeling, which won her both respect and love.

One evening, after returning from a party, where she had met both aspirants for her favor, Margaret sat thoughtfully by the fire in her dressing-room, her little white slippered feet resting on the fender, and for the hundredth time debated the merits of her two lovers with cousin Phoebe.

"You see, Phoebe," she continued, gravely, knitting her brow with an air of great perplexity, "each has his advantages. Hamilton Myers has so much talent—is so handsome—of such a good family—and withal flatters me so charmingly, that I find him—very agreeable; on the other hand, though Winthrop North talks so much less, and lets me fairly pine and pout for a compliment, there is something so open, genial, and manly about him, that I think I like him almost, or quite as well as Mr. Myers."

"Mr. Myers is far the handsomest," said cousin Phoebe.

"I don't know about that," returned Margaret, quickly—"Mr. North has the most manly and expressive face, and I never did care for regular features. Yet, as you say, Mr. Myers would be thought the handsomest, and he certainly does make himself very agreeable. After talking with him half an hour, I began to feel that my old notion that I am pretty much like other people, is all a mistake. He seems so assured of my infinite superiority, that he almost succeeds in bringing me to the same agreeable

conclusion. Heigh-ho—I do wish I could decide."

"Then you are not in love with either?" asked Phoebe, a little annoyed by her friend's unromantic indecision.

"Not a bit, cousin—and what is more, I intend to keep myself heart-whole, at least till I ascertain which of my admirers loves me most worthily and sincerely. I wish I knew of some way to test the question."

"I heard of a case a few days ago, where the strength of a husband's affection was severely tried," said Phoebe. "My friend, Mrs. O—, had the small-pox during her husband's absence from home. Knowing herself to be frightfully disfigured—not a vestige left of her former beauty, she looked forward with dread to his return, fearing his feelings toward her might undergo a change. But I hear that on the contrary, he seems more attached to her than ever, and seeks by a thousand little cares and attentions, to show her that her misfortune has but made her more dear to him."

Tears rose in Margaret's clear hazle eyes at her friend's recital.

"That is *true* love," she cried, with enthusiasm—"it is so that I want to be loved. I care little for the affection which springs from mere admiration of beauty. Oh, Phoebe, if I could but meet with *such* love—*such* a lover! Phoebe, I'm in love with your friend's husband!" She rose as she spoke, and began to lay aside her party habiliments, in preparation for bed: and so the friends parted for the night.

On the morrow Margaret woke with a strange oppression in her head, a pain in her face, and a stiff neck; it was evident she had caught a severe cold at the party the night before.

Though feeling very miserable, she rose, and began to dress. Going to the glass to arrange her hair, she was shocked at the image it presented to her. The disproportionate swelling of one cheek had entirely destroyed the fair oval of her face; her eyes were dull and languid, and the color had fled from her cheeks to find a lodging-place in her nose. While she was still gazing at herself in consternation, Phoebe entered the room.

Margaret drew her attention to her own rueful face in the mirror, exclaiming—

"Did you ever see such a fright!"

Phœbe burst out laughing, and answered emphatically—

"Never! Oh, Maggy, if your lovers could but see you now, what a fine chance to test the strength of their affection!"

She spoke in the merest jest, but the idea seemed to take hold of Margaret's mind. A wild project had entered her head, which she was determined to carry out. Cousin Phœbe was easily persuaded to enter into her plan, and become chief aider and abettor therein.

For about two weeks Margaret's cold, which was a very severe one, confined her to her room; during this time Phœbe occasionally saw, and replied in person to the inquiries of the two anxious lovers, who, on hearing of Miss Nesbitt's illness, daily called to ascertain the state of her health. I am sorry to say that Phœbe, with wanton cruelty, and little regard for truth, constantly represented that illness to be of the most serious nature, and the daily visits of two physicians gave confirmation to her statements.

In course of time, however, Miss Nesbitt was pronounced convalescent. Both lovers heard the good tidings with great apparent delight, and on the following day, Mr. Myers entrusted to Phœbe's care the following note—to be conveyed to her cousin—he waiting for an answer.

"CHARMING MISS NESBITT—I have suffered unspeakable anxiety on your account. When may I hope to see you? I am impatient to whisper to you a secret which has long hovered on my lips. Dearest Margaret, can you not divine it?"

"Grant me an interview at once, I beseech you. Ever most faithfully yours,

HAMILTON MYERS."

Margaret returned for answer the following hurried lines—

"I will see you this evening at half past eight o'clock—but prepare yourself to find me much changed by my illness."

It was already late when these words were written, and but an hour was allowed to our heroine to prepare her toilet to receive her lover. It was commenced at once, and it must be confessed was rather a singular one.

In the first place, she withdrew all her rich, dark hair from her face, and hid it beneath a close fitting cap, such as sometimes disfigures ladies when some misfortune or illness, compels them to have the hair shaved from the head.

Next a loose wrapper of unbecoming style, and of a make which concealed the figure, was donned. So far had the toilet proceeded, when Phœbe entered the room; staring at the odd figure before her, she laughed long and merrily.

"You fright! you Medusa!" she cried, "you are enough to scare away the crows, let alone your lovers! Never fear but your trick will succeed."

"I have not yet done," cried Margaret, laughing as heartily as her friend. "Pray get me a raw beet root from the kitchen—I have my saffron leaves here."

The beet was soon produced, and Margaret proceeded amid peals of laughter from both herself and cousin, to dye the tip of her nose a dark red with the beet juice, and to stain her pearly teeth yellow by chewing a few leaves of saffron. She next produced a small green patch, which she placed over one eye, as though she had had the misfortune to lose it through her illness, and her toilet was complete. When we add, however, that she was still pale from her late indisposition, and her face yet slightly disfigured by the swelling which had not entirely subsided, the reader will have no difficulty in realizing that she did look, as Phœbe said, like a perfect fright.

Before this unique toilet was entirely made, a ring at the door announced the arrival of the impatient lover.

Margaret delayed to have one more hearty laugh with her cousin; and then proceeded demurely down stairs. As she opened the parlor door, Mr. Myers sprang forward to meet her. He gained the middle of the room, and then stood as if spell-bound.

Margaret advanced with grave self-possession, and extended her hand.

The courtly Mr. Myers had not even presence of mind enough to take it.

"You find me greatly changed," said Margaret, in a tone of concern, (she was something of an actress, and fully equal to the part she had undertaken,) "I see you are shocked—I thought I had prepared you for the alteration in my appearance! Did you not receive my note this afternoon?"

"No—yes—I don't know," began Mr. Myers, so much confused that he did not know what he was saying. He was engaged in now glancing furtively at the gorgon before him, and then looking hastily away. At last partial self-possession returned to him. He seized his hat, stammering something about his time being short, and took leave.

"I trust you will not go till you have told me the secret you were so anxious to communicate,"

said Margaret, mischievously, managing to cut off his retreat to the door. "It is not late—pray return and make me the confidence you desired."

Poor Mr. Myers looked really alarmed.

"Not to-night—not to-night," he exclaimed, hurriedly, trying to effect an exit, and finding his attempts were frustrated by Margaret's manœuvres. "It was a mere trifle—quite a mistake—any other time will do." And at last gaining the door by a swift and dexterous movement, he fairly fled before the advancing Medusa, who still pertinaciously urged the revelation of the promised secret.

As the hall door closed on him, Margaret's merry peals of laughter brought her cousin to her side, and the whole late scene was faithfully rehearsed for Phœbe's amusement. While the merriment of the giddy girls was at its height, and Margaret was just showing how Mr. Myers tried to dodge her at the door, another ring announced another visitor.

"There! that is surely Winthrop North—your other admirer," cried Phœbe.

Margaret's laughter suddenly died away; she grew very pale, and turned to fly precipitately to her own room. Thither she went, only pausing on the stairs long enough to decide by the sound of his footsteps, that it was indeed Mr. North. Phœbe followed her.

In vain Margaret endeavored to affect the continuance of her late merry humor. Her uncontrollable agitation revealed even to the unsuspecting Phœbe, that the question she was now about to test, was to her a far different one from the last. Perceiving this, she sought to divert her friend from her intention. But Margaret was determined to carry her whim out—saying, "If it was fair for the one, it is fair for the other—the love is worthless that will not bear my test." She desired Phœbe, however, to go down and see Mr. North, inform him of her intention of receiving his visit, and prepare him for a change in her appearance.

Phœbe soon returned from her errand, and then Margaret, gathering up her fortitude and composure, descended the stairs.

Notwithstanding the amusement she had derived from Mr. Myers' precipitate retreat, its lesson had not been lost upon her; she trembled for the result of her wild stratagem, for though unconfessed to all, even to herself, the secret of her heart now revealed itself to her, by the tumult which agitated her bosom when she thought of how much she had staked on that venture.

On reaching the parlor door, she paused with her hand on the lock—she wished for one moment more to calm the beatings of her heart,

but while she yet lingered, the lock turned beneath her hand, and Winthrop North stood before her face to face.

Involuntarily, Margaret sought to conceal her disfigured countenance in her hands, but she was too late, Mr. North had seen all.

With a tenderness, such as he had never yet manifested toward her, he drew her arm within his and led her to a sofa—telling her of the anxiety he had felt during her illness, and of his thankfulness and joy in her recovery. Other words he said of still tenderer import, but Margaret scarce understood—scarce dared listen to them; she was saying to herself over and over again—"He has not yet seen me—he will change when he sees me!" So entirely had her feelings entered into the situation she had assumed, that she actually forgot that she was playing a part.

The blessed words she dared not accept as her's, were still falling on her ear, and at last she exclaimed in desperation—

"Stay—you have not yet—looked at me. I am greatly changed. Pray—pray know the worst."

It is true that hitherto, from a motive of delicacy, Winthrop had refrained from looking at Margaret's altered face; but he now turned his eyes full upon her, saying in his cordial, manly way—

"Margaret, there is no *worst* to me, where you are concerned. Change—alter as you may, you will ever to be me *best*—dearest. Do not weep, my love—your face, though it was pleasant to look upon, did not gain my affections; they were won by something better—your noble, generous nature, which is still left you, and of which no misfortune can deprive you. Dear Margaret, tell me that I have not loved in vain."

But Margaret was unable to speak, so violently was she weeping—happy, blissful tears they were, but they compelled her to fly from the apartment to regain her composure.

On reaching her own room, however, she lost not a moment in flinging from her the disguises which disfigured her. The red disappeared from her nose, the yellow from her teeth, and the patch from her eye in a marvelously short space of time. Her rich, beautiful hair was released from the ugly cap, and folded simply round her elegantly formed head. A white robe replaced the shapeless wrapper; excitement had brought a bright color to her cheeks; but the tears were yet sparkling in her clear brown eyes, as she reappeared before her lover.

Winthrop North was pacing up and down the room when she entered; she approached him unperceived, and laying her hand on his arm, looked up in his face.

Winthrop turned and gazed at her in astonishment. Never had she looked so perfectly lovely. Tears and smiles—tenderness and merriment were struggling for mastery in her bright face.

"Forgive me, Winthrop," she said, in a low, sweet voice, full of tenderness—"forgive me a jest—too serious, perhaps—but one I can never regret, since it has revealed to me how manly and generous is the love of a truly noble heart. How glad I am not to be obliged to accept the sacrifice you showed yourself so capable of making, since at best, I am not worthy of such love as yours."

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As Mr. North's circumstances were such as to justify his immediate marriage, and as there was no reason for his engagement with our heroine being kept a secret, it was soon very generally known; and, as is usual, made the topic of much conversation for a day or two.

Hamilton Myers, among others, was discussing the subject the morning after the engagement "came out." He was standing with a group of young men at the corner of the street, and had just said,

"Well, I wish North joy of his bargain, for I can attest, from ocular demonstration, that the late pretty Miss Nesbitt is at present a perfect fright—a mere wreck. I tremble when I think of the escape I have myself had—for I was nearly caught, I assure you. Never saw any body so much changed by an illness in my life—why she has lost all her teeth, and her hair,

and one eye; her nose was as red as an old toper's, and her skin the color of a dandelion—she looked like a caricature of one of the witches in Macbeth. 'Pon honor, I feel like a man who has but just escaped being caught and eaten by an ogress."

So far had Myers volubly proceeded in his description, when one of his companions touched him—he turned, and saw, close beside him, Miss Nesbitt leaning on her lover's arm, and looking more beautiful than he had ever seen her.

Mr. North had delayed her a moment to speak to an old friend of his, whom he recognized in the group, and while he was doing so, Margaret had time to say to Myers, with a malicious smile, her bright eyes dancing with merriment,

"I fear it is too late for you to confide your secret to me, Mr. Myers, but perhaps with my resemblance to witches, I am also endowed with enough of their attributes to divine what it might have been, had not fortune rescued you from the hands of the 'ogress.' And henceforth you will know how to beware of witches and ogresses."

Leaving the discomfited and puzzled Mr. Myers, (whose brains on this subject have never cleared) to reply as he best can to the indignant queries of his companions as to the meaning of the representations he had been making them, and to solace himself as well as he is able, for having lost the hope of obtaining the sweetest and prettiest girl in the city for a wife, we take our leave of him, as well as of our happy heroine, and the lover who so nobly stood the love-lost.

## SEVENTEEN AND THIRTY-SEVEN.

BY FRANK LEE.

SUCH a bird's-nest of a room! Why one glance into that delightful smuggery was enough to steal the heart of any bachelor living—no matter how cross and crabbed he might be—even without a sight at its occupant. Though the possessor of that gem of a boudoir with all its elegant trifles and luxuries—to say nothing of the six lace flounces on her light silk skirt, and the wreath of blue corn flowers in her blonde head-dress—was an item by no means to be passed over in silence.

Very pretty looked Mrs. Jenny Derwent as she leaned back in her purple *fauteuil*, with her favorite pug reposing on a footstool at her feet—she had a fondness for dogs—and turned the rings upon her white, plump fingers round and round, with the air of one absorbed in deep, yet pleasant thought.

Very bewitching too she was, with that peculiar manner which it is given to widows only to attain, and the soft lamp-light stealing through rose colored shades, and restoring to her yet rounded cheek the bright, delicious bloom of early youth. A very sensible woman was she, and like a prudent widow of thirty-seven—not a day older, no matter what Mrs. Stubbs across the way might whisper—abhorred the *unrefined* glare of shadeless luminaries.

For at least the one hundredth time, she picked up a little note lying on the table before her, and glanced over the bold, masculine-looking lines, with a soft, birdie laugh, which, in spite of her efforts, would end in a sigh. Like all of her sex, the fair relict of Joseph Derwent, banker, had wandered through a little romance entirely unconnected with the aforesaid Joseph Derwent, a fat, asthmatic old primp! But long before had she given up her pet dream for connubial felicity with a creature who looked like a bale of wadding stuffed to repletion with green turtle soup.

Let us unravel the little mystery which had been tied up in old Time's bundle of relics, to grow musty along with divers other heart histories; and which Mrs. Jenny flattered herself that she had bestowed her last thought upon—though there she was somewhat mistaken—but no matter.

Ten—Lord bless me, is it possible!—twenty years ago, our heroine was seventeen, and like

any other chit just let loose from the thralldom of boarding-school, ready to make herself chief character in any sentimental episode which might turn up in her way.

Where she first met Pomfret Leniter I am unable to say, and with that we have nothing to do, it is the *sequitire* to that important or unimportant—according as one believes in Fate—which concerns us. But speedily a flirtation of the most desperate kind sprung up between them, and one night at a military ball where Jenny danced all her partners down—amid the intoxication of waltzing and flowers, the gilt-buttoned lieutenant drew from her a frank avowal—you all know the rest, I can't stop to be sentimental! Home went Jenny, congratulating herself on being that fortunate specimen of femininity, an engaged young lady, and dwelling on the perfection of her lover—all the while stabbing the toilet cushion with her pins as mercilessly as if she delighted in the operation.

But alas! the "best laid schemes of mice and men oft gang a-ga'e," or as Viola more poetically expressed it—"The course of true love did never yet run smooth," and Jenny found her fate no exception to the general rule. The very next day, while pale and pensive—she thought from the effects of first passion, though a wiser person would have set it down to the oyster-soup—it was revealed to her by her watchful mother that she was to marry Joseph Derwent. Poor Jenny! Of course she wept and vowed she wouldn't—what else could any girl do under the circumstances?

"A fat, gouty, old primp! Marry him indeed!" and then she wept again; but mamma stood the pelting of the summer shower with a degree of firmness worthy of a better cause, and when night came, re-echoed her determination with tones unchanged as the chime of a bell from morn till eve. What remained for Jenny but to reveal the secret of her betrothal with as much solemnity as if she had been communicating the fact that a clandestine marriage had taken place.

"Fudge!" said mamma, when the daughter vowed with a tragic air, imitated from Fanny Kemble, "that she would live and die true to"—sob—"to her"—sob—sob—"own Pomfret!"

"Up go her colors," cried uncle Phil, the sailor.

"The deuce's in the girl, she's a perfect water-spout."

Mrs. Lantrim reminded her that even affection cannot exist long if it has nothing but itself to feed on, and quoted Keats, the muff—

"Love in a hut, with water and a crust,  
Is—Heaven preserve us—cinders, ashes, dust!"—

or would have done so, only she never read poetry, though her daughter did.

Well, the consequences were, that after much useless shedding of salt water, and many heart-breaking vows and protestations, back to his post went the lieutenant, and up to the altar went Jenny with the banker, while mamma stood by, piously arrayed in lavender satin, receiving with a smile, whose sadness did her infinite credit, the congratulations of her friends, who all whispered among themselves—"The luck of some folks!"

We will pass over the interlude of her married life in the silence it best deserves. She had laid her banker in the family vault, from whence, according to common-place philosophers, he was exhaling in the form of noxious gases to poison the air for his *not* inconsolable partner. Very ungrateful in the old fellow—when she got him under the ground, why couldn't he lie there quiet!

Whether Jenny's grief survived the hum-drum existence she led for eighteen years—a dinner party to the same prosy six old bachelors and plumed dowagers every Thursday, followed regularly by long whist in the evening, without even the consolation of knowing that her partner was dishonest—I cannot say. But if such was the case, suffering certainly agreed with her, for during those long years she was so quietly vegetating, she, once slender as a sylph, increased to more pounds avoirdupois, than we care to mention. And now, we have arrived at the point where we laid down the thread of our narrative, but let us "return to our muttons."

The fair widow was reading again the dainty note, over which she had puzzled so long before opening—true to her sex even then, for she was so busy wondering who it could be from, that she quite forgot how easily her curiosity might be satisfied, by just breaking the seal.

As this billet is the hinge on which our story rests, we give it here without apology.

"Has Jenny Lantrim wholly forgotten the memories of a life gone by? I would fain hope not, therefore am I writing these lines. Twenty years since we have met! Twenty years since you wept the last tears of parting on my bosom ere they made you the bride of another. I think of you only as when I last saw you, with eyes speaking such sweet tales, and those long curls

falling round the waist this arm has so often encircled. But let me not brood over these memories, though they have comprised the sum of my existence during these lonely years since we parted. I am not married, Jenny—can you guess why?—and it is to ask permission to visit you, that I am now writing.

"If I receive no answer to this note, I shall know that you grant me leave, and shall, therefore, be at your house this evening.

"As of yore—and well you know how that was.

Yours, POMFRET LENITER."

That was the letter which had slightly discomposed the pretty relict's usual calm demeanor, and during the slow hours of that day had she been turning leaves in the long-closed book of her past.

Strange to say, she thought of her old lover only as he was when they parted—a tall, straight, graceful youth, with perhaps six hairs in his moustache—and such a figure she quite expected to see now.

Many times during every hour did she glance at the clock, and marveled that "the wheels of time worked heavily." At last it beat right. Suddenly the door was flung open—a tall, erect man, his air decidedly military—was ushered unannounced into the room.

The widow started up. She had not heard the door-bell, and expecting no visitor but her former flame, was naturally astonished at the apparition which appeared before her. The gentleman seemed to share her feelings of surprise and embarrassment, and bowed without speaking in return to her slight gesture of courtesy.

"I beg pardon," he said, still standing in the centre of the room, "but I expected to see Miss Jenny Lantrim—I suppose I should say," and he smiled and colored, "Mrs. Derwent."

That voice! how natural it sounded—could it be? Oh, impossible, her nameless guest was forty-five at least.

"I am Mrs. Derwent," she said, in a rather faltering tone.

"You? I don't wish to seem rude, but it can't be."

"Perhaps you know best," returned she, with a slight acidity; "pray, may I take the liberty of inquiring your name?"

"Certainly—Colonel Leniter."

The lady sank back in her chair perfectly aghast; the officer stood regarding her with a very puzzled expression on his countenance. The silence lasted several moments, then the widow's natural love of fun overpowered every other emotion, and screaming out—

"Bless my soul, the man is bald!" laughed

until the tears ran down her cheeks, and then she wiped them off, and laughed again. The gentleman all the while standing erect as one of the pillars to her mantel.

"You are very merry, ma'am; I see nothing so amusing."

"Oh, you don't?—well, there isn't, only—I am Jenny Lantrim. Ha! ha!"

It was too much for human nature, there was no use to be sentimental, and the colonel just sat down and laughed as hard as she did. Between them both they made such an uproar that the pug was roused from his slumber, and added his shrill bark to the general tumult. By the time he was quieted, their nerves became more composed, and all embarrassment having been rubbed off during their cachinatory trial, they seated themselves to look things in the face as they really were.

"I expected to see a young girl," said he.

"And I a lieutenant of twenty-two," returned she.

"Only a scarred colonel of forty-five!" sighed the officer.

"And a fat woman of thirty-seven," whispered the widow. Then she smiled—was she thinking that "Mrs. Col. Leniter" would look well on a wedding card? There's much in a name, Miss Juliet Capulet to the contrary notwithstanding.

Of course the gentleman contradicted her assertion; and when she looked at him again, he didn't seem so very old after all. They plunged at once into old recollections, the hours flew unheeded by, and when the prim maid entered with the tea-things unbidden, Mrs. Jenny was just snatching her plump hand from the military gentleman's grasp. The cheek nearest him wore too deep a color for a shadow from the lamp—probably he had been communicating some important army secret. Of course he staid to tea, and the long and short of it was, that thenceforth poor pug was forced to divide his kisses and caresses with the epauletted stranger, a state of things by no means pleasing to his dogship's feelings.

## THE SLEDDING PARTY.

BY A. L. OTIS.

SIXTY years ago, when many of the citizens of Boston, now most noted for their intelligence, enterprise and wealth, were farmers sons, doing farm-work, or cabin-boys in merchant vessels; sixty years ago, there was a generation of stirring, vigorous hearts, to whom action, energetic action, was as great a necessity as the breath of their nostrils. They could work all day to earn their bread from the stony soil of New England, and then, on those evenings when they were not studying, (perhaps Greek or Latin, perhaps more practical branches) they would put on snow-shoes, and walk ten miles to dance all night at a quilt-party.

It was a bright evening, when the crisp snow reflected back the moonlight in undiminished brilliancy, and even the rabbit track could be seen down the corn-field, when the shadows behind the stones were clear azure, and the gate-posts looked like two drowsy Mussulmen, with white turbans in danger of falling off, that four of Farmer Maule's stalwart sons stretched their long limbs under the supper-table, from which even they had not been able to clear its load of hasty pudding and pumpkin pies, asking, "What was the fun to-night?"

"Can't the boys do without fun till Thanksgiving is over? Rest till Thursday and you'll be the fresher for a frolic," suggested the mother, from the huge chimney, where after swinging out the long black crane, she had been dipping water from the boiler to wash the tea-things.

"Mother," cried Jack, "two days without fun would be the death of me!"

"Don't go out to-night, boys," rejoined the mother. "Are not the girls coming home from school? You would feel proper flat to be out of the way, if the stage should upset, coming through the drifts, and you should be wanted to harness up a team, and give some help. I guess you had better be about."

"Is it by to-night's stage the girls come home?" cried Ephraim, starting to his feet.

"Yes, you know they couldn't come on the Sabbath, and Saturday the ox-teams were breaking the snow on the roads for the stage. The poor girls will be very cold, for it will take at least three hours to come the ten miles from S——, and that is the last place they can stop to warm at."

"Who are to come home with their 'educations finished' this time?" asked Jack, his face scarlet.

"Oh, Mabel Munroe will be here, never fear, Jack," cried Nathan, with a wink to his brothers—"but who else, mother?"

"Well, Mary and Hetty are coming."

"Of course, mother, they would come home to Thanksgiving. You always take care our girls shall have a part in all the fun that is going—but who besides our sisters?"

"Well, several of the prettiest girls of the village, so don't be out of the way, boys!"

"They will be half frozen," said Benjamin, thoughtfully. "Suppose we put on our skates, boys, and go up the river to S——, it is only half as far that way, as by the road——"

"And take the ox-sled," interrupted Nathan.

"And skate home with the girls—hurrah boys!" cried Jack, springing up the ladder which led to his sleeping apartment, to make hasty preparations.

"I think it would be better to take our small sleds," said Nathan, "we couldn't skate together enough to pull that large one, and if we came to an air-hole or anything, the risk is not so great. We can call in some more of the boys, and get enough sleds to bring the girls home singly."

"Let us have all the fellows," said Benjamin. "Those who don't get one of the girls, can have the fun of skating."

"Make haste then!" and in a few minutes mufflers and overcoats were donned, and with a signal whoop to "the fellows," the four young men took their way down the village street, overtaken frequently by some of their companions, who hurried out at the well known call to fun.

Assembled on the bank of the river, the boys consulted as to their plans, and while the younger ones who were sent for sleds and skates were hurrying on their errand, the others appropriated some pine-knots, which had been procured for some political occasion, that those who were not so privileged as to have a lady to sled home, might have something to do as torch-bearers to the company.

"All ready?" cried Ephraim's powerful voice.

"One, two, three, and away!"

The skaters bent forward, and skimming over

the ice like sea-birds, seemed to leave the ringing sound of their skates far behind them.

At the little village inn, a stage load of blooming girls from boarding-school, were crowding around the fire, some crying with cold, others with heat, having inconsiderately put their benumbed feet too suddenly near the fire, others complaining piteously of the ten miles they still had to travel in the bitter cold, before they could greet their own warm firesides. But others were laughing merrily, for it takes long continued suffering to quell the gushing joy of some hearts.

Among the laughers was Mabel Munroe, a rosy brunette of sixteen, who was just giving up a warm chimney nook, to a slim, half-frozen, gentle girl, one of those who always suffer keenly from cold, whether it be cold weather or cold hearts. Fortunately they have generally that exquisite sweetness of manner, which soon opens the warmest nook to them in both homes and hearts. So it was now. Louise Ames was made comfortable, while the merry Mabel covered the goodness of her act, by some very provoking remarks on the blue noses and red hands of the company.

But we have no time to spend with the girls, for the skaters were coming on swift as the wind, and soon there was heard in the bar-room a great noise of stamping feet, loud laughing, and merry greeting. In a few moments, while the girls were in a state of the greatest curiosity, the noise subsided into what appeared to be a consultation in an under-tone. In about a quarter of an hour, the door was opened by the smiling landlady, who was all mystery, but "would advise the girls to get as comfortable as they could, to take off their hoods and cloaks, and let the fire get to them, for the stage would not be round just yet," also, "to smooth their hair, and look proper nice." The girls were astonished. Were they to be visited by a school committee?

They lost no time, however, in doing as they were told. By the time they were warm, and the color had retired from their noses to their cheeks, and the tips of their chins—by the time their eyes had taken in enough firelight to sparkle for the rest of the evening, and their curls were shaken out, after the cramping in hoods they had undergone—the kitchen door was thrown open, and there, before the long table steaming with most delicious odors, the delighted girls, saw advancing to greet them, such a host of friends, cousins, brothers and lovers, that they were at first abashed. But this momentary embarrassment was soon terminated in a manner that raised a laugh, and set all at ease again.

Mabel having descried Jack, and turned but one bright glance upon him—he made such a

spring forward toward her, that, his boots having still a little snow on them, he slipped, and came down rather suddenly, at her feet, fortunately for his future prospects in that quarter, not in an awkward sprawl, or ungainly squat—but upon one knee; and as he saved himself from farther fall by grasping her hand, and then had the presence of mind to kiss it, he rose up amid roars of applause, and was the hero of the evening.

Then followed joyous, noisy greetings between the brothers and sisters, more subdued but not less tender ones from the lovers, with many an odd word of welcome from the cousins. While Ephraim's two sisters were still clinging to him, his eyes were wandering abstractedly in search of a sweet face, which he at last found gazing as eagerly at his.

I have not time to describe the somewhat boisterous supper, nor the joy of the young ladies when they heard how the rest of their journey was to be performed. Indeed, I hardly dare describe these things, for now-a-days they would not sound well, though in these times of ungovernable spirits, a rather rough sally, or a boisterous laugh, only increased the general hilarity, and wounded no over refined feelings. Nothing was thought of Ephraim's taking Louise's hands in his, and keeping them so, while she sat with her beautiful profile almost reposing on his shoulder.

One thing, however, is necessary to my story, and I must mention it. When wrappings had been donned, and the party was assembled on the river, just about to set out—just when the line of nine sleds was awaiting the signal, and the torch-bearers, two to each sled, stood in rank forming a double line, through which the sleds were to pass—all the noisy ones were silenced by Benjamin, who proposed, that as the torch-bearers had so insignificant an office, its desirableness should be enhanced by their each receiving a kiss from the lady he lighted on her way. But this proposal was received with such a storm of indignation by the sleds, that it was almost withdrawn. It was finally agreed, however, that each lady should bestow a kiss upon the one who drew her, but that if either of the torch-bearers were to witness the act, she was to grant a similar favor to both of them. The girls, who felt secure with two watchers, did not object, and with a shout that made the woods ring again, and startled the stage horses from their unexpected beds, the party set out, keeping for a time beautiful order of procession.

But this did not continue long, for each sledder wished a wide field for manœuvre, that he might win his kiss without risk of sharing it, and

the river soon looked, for a distance, like a pond in summer over which the fire-flies were flitting.

I cannot follow all the sleds, so will for a while watch Jack and Mabel. Full of mirth, and not apparently very much concerned about the promised reward, Jack skated carelessly along under the keen eyes of his torch-bearers, till he saw a clump of alder bushes growing near the shore, and hoping there was ice all around them, so that he could put them between him and his enemies, he made a sudden swift dart, and had reached them before he could check his impetus, although alas! his quick jerk had thrown Mabel from the sled, and the torch-bearers were assisting her to arise, and inquiring tenderly if she were hurt!

It is quite probable that if Jack had returned with humble apologies, and looking miserable, he would never have regained lost ground with Mabel. But with a sweep graceful as a swallow on the wing, he circled round her, and when at full speed letting go the rope to his sled, it flew like an arrow to the opposite bank. The good-natured torch-bearers feeling some compassion, for what seemed to them his awkward predicament, and anxious that he should soothe the offended Mabel, darted off to recover his sled, while he made an apology—and behold! he had time to whisper to Mabel some very sweet words, and give three kisses, the last of which was returned with good-will, before they even turned to come back.

Though they watched narrowly for the rest of the way, they did not see even an attempt, though Jack would often pretend to be seeking a chance to elude their vigilance, thus knowing that he and Mabel were enjoying a laugh in their sleeve at the useless exertions of their companions.

But how did gentle Louise like this sport? Not very much. And how did she fare? Thus. I am sorry to say that though Ephraim's heart beat high, it was not altogether with pleasure, and that as he saw the gaze of his two spies fixed so mischievously upon him, he muttered between his teeth some not very complimentary remarks. Indeed his temper grew worse and worse. He was angry because rather than share his privileges, he would forego them, and this was not very agreeable. Such little tricks as that by which Jack accomplished his purpose, did not suit him, and this very evening he had hoped to hear from Louise what he had waited years to be able to ask. He had earned a home to which he would be proud to lead her, and, no longer a very young man, he could not easily brook being thwarted in his will by a foolish frolic. His broad chest heaved with its one engrossing, yet repressed feeling, as he saw her eyes timidly seek

his face, with a look trembling between fear and hope. That now he should have two spies at his elbow!

Ah, Ephraim, it is better to keep your good-humor, for presence of mind almost always accompanies it, and by being sullen you lost a fine chance.

While passing a dense wood, a deer, alarmed by the lights and shouts of those who had gone before, plunged from the bushes, and, bewildered, darted up the river. It was too tempting—more so than the kiss, and both the torch-bearers dashing down their torches, gave it chase. Now—if Ephraim had had his wits about him! But his feelings, so lately only of irritation and anger, would not instantly prompt words of love, and before he spoke back came the spies. The deer had escaped, and so had Ephraim's opportunity. The torches were no loss, for the moonlight was bright enough to have made the kiss visible, had it only been a written one.

Louise, as was natural, felt slighted, and even more deeply alarmed, lest she had not read aright all these expressive looks which had long since won her heart.

Suddenly, under their very feet, a sharp crack was heard, and with all his force Ephraim threw from him the rope to the sled, and then, trying in vain to check himself in time, he disappeared beneath the ice—and with him his foremost companion. The other, who was by Louise's side, seized the rope, and, with a sudden twirl, sent the sled some distance from the air-hole, then returned to save his friends. Ephraim was still under the ice, but his companion had partly raised himself from the water, and was easily extricated.

Louise had sprung from the sled, and though afraid to venture on the cracking ice, where the swift skaters went with impunity, she ran toward the shore, and was almost near enough to give her hand to Ephraim, when his head and struggling arms first made their appearance above the water. His feet were on firm ground, but he was so chilled and exhausted that he could hardly stand. He was dragged ashore and laid upon the snow, while his friend rubbed his benumbed limbs. Meantime the other unfortunate fellow had hurried on to keep himself warm, and with the other skaters was out of sight.

Ephraim, from his long exposure and wet clothes, grew colder and colder; he seemed fast sinking into the lethargy of death, when Louise begged his friend to hasten after the others, and halloo for assistance, while she watched by Ephraim. He complied, and Louise, left alone with the almost dying man, felt her heart grow

strong within her. Taking from the sled the small robe, she wrapped his feet in it—and throwing her own cloak over him, crept close to him, laying her gentle, warm head upon his bosom, and holding him closely in her arms.

Ephraim was not yet quite asleep, and warm blood could still gush from his heart, overcoming the sluggish current in his frozen veins.

“Louise,” he muttered, indistinctly, “is any one here?”

“No, not now.”

“Louise—I cannot—will *you* kiss *me*?”

Instantly, the warm tears trickling from her face to his, she did as he asked, and at that instant fresh life seemed to wake in him, for he clasped her in his arms and returned her kiss many times.

“You have awaked me,” he said, “you have saved my life”—and indeed he had time to grow quite warm—in his eloquence at least—before assistance arrived.

The party safely at home, all fears and disasters over, merriment reigned supreme. By Thanksgiving day the “Intention of Marriage of Ephraim Maule and Louise Ames” was posted on the church door, according to custom, four weeks before the ceremony, and nothing ever more delighted the villagers.

As for Jack and Mabel, it was not many years before their names appeared in a similar announcement in the same place, but many a wise old head was shaken with the smiling remark, that so gay a couple should hardly venture on such a serious affair as matrimony.

# ADA LESTER'S SEASON IN NEW YORK.

BY CARRY STANLEY.

## PART I.

NEW YORK, January 5th.

DEAR MAGGIE—

PAPA has told you, before this, of our journey hither, and our hair-breadth escapes. This is absolutely the first moment since I left home that I have had time to write a word. Whilst papa was here, every minute he could spare from business was devoted to taking me around to the various institutions, and other places of interest, to which I now find fashionable people do not go. Indeed my cousins look upon it as one of the strongest marks of my village, or "country" breeding, as they call it, the interest which I take in these things; and I verily believe that they know less now about New York than I do, in that respect.

Well, Maggie, do you know that it almost gave me the heart-ache to let papa go home without me. All the pleasure that I had promised myself in my visit to a great city, seems so trivial compared with the love and comforts of home, that had it not been for very shame at seeming so like a baby, I should have packed up and returned with him. Do you know that there seems to be no *home* in New York? No domestic happiness, I mean. The men live in their counting-houses, think of nothing but the "almighty dollar," and one would scarcely know that their families belonged to them if they did not bear the same name. But the men are not to be so blamed, after all, for such a life is an irresistible necessity, the way in which society is constructed here.

The women spend the money as fast as the husband and father can make it, (some faster, I suspect, from gossip that I hear now and then, which sounds very much like scandal to uninitiated ears,) scarcely seem to know the meaning of *home*, except as a place elegantly furnished where they sleep and eat sometimes, and give balls, and receive calls once a week. The hearty, healthy interest which our village matrons, even the wealthiest of them, feel in their household duties, is unknown here, that is among the fashionable people who are New York *par excellence*. The rooms are all drawing-rooms, halls, boudoirs and chambers, splendidly, but not *cosily* furnished, and there is no family

circle where mamma presides, and the daughters gather around with happy faces and useful work. It is true that in the rose-wood and brocatelle furnished *boudoir*, there may stand an easel or a drawing-table, but the brushes are untouched and the pencils uncut; or there may be a *papier mache* work-stand inlaid with pearl, lined with crimson watered silk, and furnished with gold sewing implements, scent bottles, &c.; but the work accomplished is in accordance with all the rest, for it consists of a tiny piece of linen cambric, with a few pencil marks on it, and about a hundred stitches done in embroidery cotton; (worsted work is antiquated now, Maggie, and a lady who says "zephyr" is tabooed) and the fair occupant of the boudoir opens her stand about the hour of receiving morning calls, and if a gentleman is sufficiently intimate at the house to be introduced into this *sanctum*, he is wonderfully edified by the industry and elegance of the young lady who plays gracefully with her work, and takes a stitch now and then to show her rings, in a most bewitching manner.

But there are boudoir consultations, Maggie, of the utmost importance. These consist principally of "ways and means;" the to-be-invited and excluded guests of the next party, the color of a bonnet, the trimming of a ball-dress, or the probability of an offer to Amanda Malvina from the Baron Krautenbeer.

If there is anything for which a New York fashionable lady returns thanks at church on Sunday, I suspect it is that she is a New York fashionable lady, and not the jealously guarded wife of a Turk. As I before said, the principle use which they make of their homes is to sleep in, eat in, and receive calls in, for it seems to me that they almost live in the streets, or rather in their carriages, in the stores, and on the door-steps of their friends.

Now, Maggie, *ma chere*, imagine these beautiful butterflies on a stormy day, when nobody can go out, and nobody can come in, and the hours are so long till it is time for Therese to begin dressing the hair for the evening's ball or opera. I have been behind the scenes and know all about it. Such a rumming against the window-panes and wondering when it *will* clear; such yawning and turning over of tasseled, eider-down cushions,

in order to find a soft place whereon to lay the weary head and sleep away a little of the tedious time; such practising of piano, and harp, and voice; and then such energy (the only time when energy is displayed) with which the poor fluttering thing declares that this detestable weather which seems inclined to last forever, (it may have been raining since day-break only, mind you,) has ruined the piano keys, and harp strings, and made her as hoarse as a frog.

Maggie, Maggie, this life is really pitiable. I believe they think it vulgar to read a book that has genius above a trashy annual, or that is not written by Sue and Dumas, and are inclined to pronounce those who in any degree keep up with the literature of the times, as *blues*, and have vague ideas that they *may* take snuff, *ought* to wear glasses, and *must* be slovenly in their dress.

Yet I am not as famished in the way of intellectual food as you might imagine. My cousin George, who, you know, was married some time ago and went to Europe with his bride, it seems is a very intelligent man, from what I hear, and can judge from the expensive and well-selected library which his room contains, and to which uncle Hinton has given me free access. By the way, this same marriage is a sore point with aunt and the girls, I suspect, for Mrs. George Hinton, the younger, is not of their Brahminical caste, but a lovely, intelligent girl, not at all rich, whom master George met at Newport, where she was nursing a sick father. The whole thing was such a novelty to a man educated as he had been, that he fell desperately in love with her for variety's sake. As aunt said in speaking to me of the circumstance, he had such odd notions of things, and was so head-strong, that they knew they might as well make the best of it, and let him marry her.

I believe that her gentle, dignified manners have rather softened their feelings toward her, and uncle speaks really very affectionately of her.

I am afraid, Maggie dear, that I have given you an unfavorable opinion not only of New York generally, but of my relatives also. Now this would be most unkind, after receiving their hospitality, but I have said all to them, about my opinions of society that I have written to you. They acknowledge it, of course, but say that they must do as the world does. The old story! Uncle Hinton is very kind to me, talks more to me than to either of his daughters, and is pleased to say that he loves to have me by him, for I look so much like mamma did when she was the belle of C—. I think that he sometimes looks back with regret to the days when he was only the

son of a village lawyer, with enough money for his comparatively few wants, the first for a picnic, singing-school, or sleigh ride; and I fancy that he sometimes sighs over invoices and bank accounts, and looks forward to the time when he will pronounce all this "unprofitable, and only vanity."

Aunt Hinton is naturally a good-hearted, characterless woman, but terribly afraid of the world; whilst Louise, the eldest daughter, has a good deal of her father's native intelligence, a good deal of selfishness, and has been very much spoiled by her beauty, her position in society, and the useless life she leads.

Ella, my youngest cousin, has not yet gone through the terrible ordeal, through which Louise has passed, for she has been in society but a short time, and is a frank, good-natured girl, willing to "live and let live."

I was going, dear Maggie, to tell you about the New Year's calls and a dozen other things, but find that I have already stretched my letter to a most unreasonable length; and it is near post time, so for further particulars inquire of mamma, to whom I wrote yesterday. Say to her that I got her letter this morning, and though I am delighted that they are well, my vanity is somewhat hurt that they do not appear to miss me more.

Yours ever, dear Maggie,

ADA LESTER.

NEW YORK, January 25th.

MA CHÈRE AMIE—

I do not wonder that a good intention is scarcely ever fulfilled in New York—there is never time for it. The school book story of busy-idleness is amply illustrated here. One is constantly doing something, but nothing is ever accomplished, and yet so much do we set with the current, that the round of inane occupations which so wearied, and seemed so trivial to me when I first came, has now grown quite easy, and I was near saying almost interesting.

But I was going to tell you about the New Year's calls, was I not? Well, for the last few days of the old year, the girls were talking of the probability of several interesting and distinguished foreigners, as they said, being added to their list of acquaintance on New Year's day, when every one who wants to know a lady, or has ever had a bowing acquaintance with her, is privileged to call.

"We shall be sure," said Louise, "to see Horace Blanchard then. He has been home for several days, and I think it strange that he has not called before now."

Now this Horace Blanchard, it seems, is an

intimate friend of George's, and has just returned from Europe. I soon discovered that he was one of the *exceedingly eligibles*, by the respect with which the girls spoke of him.

We commenced the New Year with an unusually early breakfast, and as we left the table to make our toilets, Ella cautioned me to be sure to appear in full dress. Now, Maggie, what they call full dress in New York, is anything but what we should call *full dress* in C—; in fact, it took a long while for me to think it anything at all but about *half* dress, for the neck and shoulders are most shamefully uncovered, (a rigid following of French fashion plates) but what is taken from there is added to the train of the skirt.

Ella was in a perfect fever of excitement. She has just "come out," you know, so this is the first time she has ever "set up" to receive calls on her own account, and been admitted to the full privileges of young lady-dom. She flew into the drawing-room as we passed, and pushed a chair back here and there "in order," she said, "to give the gentlemen more bowing room."

In truth, this seemed to me to be needed, for the furniture in fashionable houses seems all to stand in the middle of the room, and not against the wall, nor even near it. Did papa tell you of my *naïve* remark the morning we arrived here and were shown into the drawing-room? It was about one o'clock, and I said to him, "goodness, what lazy servants and bad housekeeping, they have not dusted the parlor and put it to rights yet." Papa shouted with laughter, and told me that it was the fashionable way of furnishing, which I have since found to be true; but I really thought that they had had company the night before, and that the room had been left in this confusion, and not since attended to. To this day though, I walk through the drawing-rooms here somewhat nervously, having an uncomfortable feeling about the ankles, in steering among the lounging chairs, *tête-à-tête*s, tea-poya, &c., which strew the apartment. Now you know, Maggie, that I don't like anything squared by rule in a room, but I like some regularity in the irregularity of furniture; but here one might judge that it was a mathematical rule of upholstery never to place an article nearer than three feet from the wall, and to congregate as much in the middle of the room as possible. But all this has nothing to do with the New Year's calls.

Louise and Ella were in the drawing-room before me, as I had set down to write a letter home previous to dressing. Louise looked really

elegant in a gold and black brocade, which was very becoming to her brunette style of beauty; and Ella equally showy in a pink silk trimmed with white illusion. My dress of simple white tarletane was of course very plain beside those of my cousins, and Ella good-naturedly offered to add to it, by going to the conservatory and bringing a couple of superb white camillas for my hair, and a crimson and a white one with their glory-leaves for my *bouquet de corsage*. Uncle stopped on his way to his sleigh, which was awaiting him at the door, (as he too had his round of calls to make) gave all our appearance a hearty commendation, kissed us affectionately, and departed. I went to the window, and stood behind the heavy curtains to see him off. You cannot imagine how animated a scene the street presented. It was a glorious day, with the brightest sunshine, and the bluest sky one ever saw, and the air was just frosty enough to keep the snow which covered the ground from thawing; and along the gentlemen glided in their cockle-shell sleighs, with their spirited horses and tinkling bells, seeming to forget, for that day at least, there was such a thing as care or sorrow in the world.

Did I tell you that they *shave* the horses here? It seemed to me a most cruel thing at first, to deprive them of the good warm coat with which kind nature had provided them for winter, but I am told that there is no danger of their taking cold if they are properly covered when not travelling. It certainly adds very much to their appearance, they look so smooth and glossy.

Of course on New Year's day there is not a lady (in the conventional sense) to be seen in the streets.

I had not been at the window long before a sleigh whirled up, from which alighted a couple of gentlemen, and the white cravated, white vested, and white gloved waiter James, soon ushered them into the parlor. In a few moments others, and still others arrived, some of whom made quite long calls, whilst others rushed in, said a few words, and then rushed out again, as if they were crazy.

A table of refreshments, consisting of coffee, wines, oysters, boned turkey, &c. &c., was set in the tea-room, opening out of the drawing-room, to which some did not go, and some did. Several, I thought, partook more largely of wine than the early hour seemed to warrant. Others, who were cold from their ride, but more temperate, took only coffee or chocolate.

I had been sitting beside aunt Hinton, who shone resplendent in black velvet and diamonds, merely bowing to the gentlemen whom she intro-

duced to me, when I heard her whisper, "there is Mr. Blanchard."

I looked up and saw a fine, tall man, with brown hair and eyes, and of a much more intelligent and dignified air than I thought most of my cousin's visitors possessed. Aunt arose and greeted him very cordially, and as I found he was telling her and the girls about George and his wife, I withdrew a little behind them to a table on which some books were lying. These I pretended to look at, but I will confess, dear Maggie, hypocrite that I was, that I was in reality listening to the conversation of one of whom I had heard so much.

Presently he said to Louise in a somewhat lower voice, "Pray, Miss Hinton, who is that young lady at the table?"

"A connexion of papa's from the country," was the reply, in a low, constrained voice, yet loud enough for me to hear. "It's her first visit to the city. I will give you an introduction, if you wish it, you will probably be amused, as she is something of a blue."

And with this flattering description I was summarily dismissed, Louise *la superba*, being evidently aggrieved by my want of style, and my only redeeming point, dear Maggie, being that I was a "connexion of papa's," not his niece, mind you, for "papa" is universally respected and looked up to as a monied man in New York.

"She is really a charming girl, but quite deficient in style," put in my aunt, in her compromise way.

Ella in the meantime had been chatting away now to Mr. Blanchard, and now to the group of gentlemen who surrounded her, caring little for the impression she was making, which was really a favorable one, for she was fresh in the world, and a "fresh girl" in New York is really a novelty.

"Now, Miss Ella," said Mr. Blanchard, "I must get you to introduce me to your friend, as Miss Hinton is engaged with the count," and a satirical smile lighted his face as he glanced at Louise, who was receiving some Don Wiskerando with the greatest *empressement*.

"This is your first visit to the city, I think, Miss Lester," said he, after the introduction took place, "and of course the first time you have ever seen the system of New Year's calls in perfection. Pray what do you think of it?"

"That there is too much wine drunk, and that those who start out as gentlemen in the morning, do not return home as such," replied I, sharply, for I felt that he was trying to read me. "And, moreover," I continued, "it gives every man who chooses to do so, the liberty to call and become

acquainted with a lady, and thus many disagreeable, and, I suspect, often injurious acquaintances, are made."

Maggie, do you know that the man provoked me beyond endurance, he absolutely sat there and showed his white teeth, and smiled as if he compassionated my petulance, and would excuse it, for I was only a "country girl," so it was not to be expected that I should know any better.

After a few more desultory remarks, he said, "How do you like New York society, Miss Lester?"

"It might be better than it is," replied I, still in my sharp way, "if it was not composed principally of silly boys and girls, instead of intelligent men and women; and it seems to me that these young gentlemen, who are made up mostly of shirt collars and sleeves, and the young ladies, who are only automatons to advertise Stewart and Beck, would both be better off in the school-room."

Mr. Blanchard gave a gay laugh, the most natural thing which I have heard since I came to New York, and said that it was easily to be seen that "young America" was not in favor with me.

I laughed from sympathy, and replied that—"As a school girl, boys in roundabouts had been my particular aversion, but that I found them no more agreeable in premature coats; why," said I, with a good deal of energy, I suspect, "they seem to me to have sprung from babyhood into society, as full grown as Minerva was when she emerged from the teeming brain of Jupiter."

"The great fault of our fashionable society," replied my companion, "is that there is nothing in it. It is just like the froth on the can of porter to which some one likened English society, there is nothing of it when you come to taste it. One could forgive our fashionables if there was any heartiness even in their follies, but they seem too satiated even to enjoy that."

"Yes," said I, "I have not been to a concert or party since I came here, that I have not thought of old Froissart's remark about the English, hundreds of years ago, 'Every one takes his pleasure sadly as is their custom.'"

"Froissart!" and with this Mr. Blanchard drew his chair nearer to the table by which I was sitting, leaned his elbow on it, and said,

"I am so glad, Miss Lester, that you have read the quaint old chronicler; I have a superbly illustrated copy which I have just brought home, that you must see."

And, will you believe it, Maggie? that man actually talked with me two hours to my great delight then, but to my mortification subsequently,

when after He was gone, I remembered that Louise had told him I was "a blue," and knew that he only did it to amuse himself and draw out a "country girl." I bit my lips till the blood almost came, with sheer vexation.

The calls continued till quite late in the evening, and I think that but comparatively few of the gentlemen were entirely sober by ten o'clock, and I know that some of them were most decidedly and shamefully otherwise.

But, my dear friend, I had a thousand other things to tell you, only those New Year's calls have run away with me at locomotive speed.

Yours ever,                      ADA LESTER.

NEW YORK, February 16th.

MAGGIE, Maggie, I have absolutely seen and heard Sontag. It is really a luxury which you cannot even *half* appreciate, no one can, till they have seen and heard her. She is here performing in Opera, and uncle has taken seats for the season, so I shall always have an opportunity to go if I wish.

You must know that the theatre where she is playing will contain ten times as many people as the little one at C—, and just imagine a house of that size filled from floor to ceiling with ladies in full dress, (New York *full dress*, I mean, of course,) glittering with diamonds; plumes waving with every motion of the fan; head-dresses that cost as much as poor old widow G—'s yearly house rent does; opera cloaks that are marvels of beauty and extravagance; ermine fit for a princess; laces, a yard of which it takes a poor girl six months to make:—imagine all this if you can, with the wonderful assortments of colors, the brilliant gas-lights, and the bewitching little overture to *La Fille du Regiment*, all combined.

The first time I saw Sontag was as "The Daughter of the Regiment." Her voice, though failing, has been so thoroughly trained, that one must be hypercritical to find fault with it, and then her acting is just perfection. One cannot believe that the bewitching girl of eighteen, as she appears on the stage, is a grandmamma. It is marvelous. As the play went on I got quite hysterical, laughed and cried in one breath, and I suspect to Louise's disgust, who thinks it vulgar ever to betray feeling. The only redeeming point which I have, in her estimation, is, that I am naturally so reticent. Well, Maggie, I thought Sontag's "*La Fille du Regiment*" charming, but it was baby play to her "*Lucie de Lammermoor*." I am becoming fashionable too, you must know, since papa's last remittance, with its consequence, some new dresses, and in order to keep

up with the crowd around me, I determined that I would *not* cry, so I bit my lips till the blood nearly came, but it would not do, and like poor old uncle Ned, the tears run down my cheeks like rain. Mr. Blanchard, who was with us, kindly tried to shield me from the observation of *la belle Louise*, by leaning over and talking to me, but I suspect he did not entirely succeed, as she was quite cross afterward. But such acting, such acting, Maggie, you cannot imagine! What happy appreciation and strong sympathies Sontag must have to be able to render that terrible story so vividly. Verily, Maggie, the sorrows of poor Lucie almost crazed me. I used to think that nothing could equal the story as told by Scott, but ah! there is nothing but music that can interpret the wail of a broken heart.

Sontag, and a most provoking thing which occurred this morning, are all that I shall think of for a week, I suspect. After breakfast the carriage was ordered as usual, for the morning's routine of calls, shopping, and luncheon at Thompson's saloon; but as I find my health is not so good in consequence of late hours, and the want of my usual active exercise in the open air, I told my cousins that I would prefer not accompanying them, but would take a long walk instead; so running up to my room I wrapped myself up warmly in my furs, and off I started.

It was a glorious day, the air clear and frosty, the sky blue and sunshine bright, and I went on in high glee, for I felt like a child just out of school.

I walked for at least two hours, and then returned home quite wearied with the unusual exercise. I smoothed my hair and prepared for dinner, then picked up my book, and made my way into the drawing-room. We do not dine here, you know, till five o'clock; so although it was not nearly dark, the heavy curtains gave the room quite a twilight appearance; that fact, I suppose, combined with the warm room, my fatigue, and the long walk in the frosty air, made me most deliciously drowsy. I threw my head back, therefore, and settled myself comfortably in the great lounging-chair for a nap. I know not how long I had slept, but I awoke with a start, and my mouth *wide open*, (you know what a *horrible* habit I have of sleeping with my mouth open) and who should I see standing before me with a scarcely suppressed smile, but that Mr. Blanchard. It makes me laugh now, to think how angry I was *with the man*, because he had seen me so. "Well," said I, in my usual *brusque* manner, "I hope you admired the view." To my indignation this almost convulsed him with laughter. Thanks to dame Nature, for endowing

me with a stock of inborn impudence, which serves me admirably here, in lieu of a fashionable education, I again settled myself easily in the chair and went on, "I acknowledge, Mr. Blanchard, that my position was much more comfortable than elegant, but then I had a good precedent; you know Marie Mancini, who so fascinated the fastidious Louis XIV., always slept so." He made no direct reply, but leaned over, still with that smile which he *could* not suppress, and took from my hand my book. The volume happened to be De Quincy's "Opium Eater," which has been bewitching me lately.

"Oh," said I, determined to carry the thing off with a high hand, "it was nothing soporific in the book, as the name might indicate, but an unusual quantity of exercise which I took this morning in the open air, that was the cause of my drowsiness." All this was said indifferently enough, but I really wished the fellow at the bottom of the sea. I would give anything to know how long he had been watching me, and with the usual justice of human nature, I could really find it in my heart to *hate him* for seeing me in that ridiculous situation. Do you think too, he had come to bring me that illuminated edition of Froissant, that he had mentioned on New Year's day! When aunt and the girls returned from their drive, Louise seemed rather inclined to sneer at my *penchant* for walking, and hoped I had enjoyed myself; but when I told them at the dinner-table of my afternoon's adventure, she was not nearly as much mortified as I expected she would be, and in fact seemed to enjoy it vastly.

Valentine's Day, you know, dear Maggie, is almost a myth with us, but here the custom is most rigorously kept up. At least what they call the custom here; for it really has nothing to do with the old-fashioned *actual* love letters, filled with Cupids, and hearts and arrows, and the sighs of despairing swains, such as we read of, but seems to be a licensed day, for more nonsense and vulgarity, and extravagance to pass through the post-office, than the other three hundred and sixty-four days together could furnish.

For a week previous to the fourteenth, the shop windows of the lower kinds are filled with the most abominable caricatures, which are sold from the price of three cents upward, things within the range of everybody's purse, tended to wound by their coarseness; whilst the stationers of the better class have their windows crowded with elegant vellum paper, sometimes exquisitely painted in wreaths and bouquets, or actual wreaths of fine French artificial flowers, with

the love verses already indited; others have borders which beautifully imitate the finest and most elaborate lace; whilst others again have little pockets, as it were, compactly put on, in which is usually placed a ring or some other piece of jewelry, or concealing a minute mirror.

Well, on our return from our drive on Valentine's Day, we found the drawing-room table strewn with these pretty nonsenses, addressed of course to my cousins. Verses, to Louise particularly, so adulatory that you might judge from them that she was Minerva, Venus and Juno combined. To me the laughable part of the thing was, that these effusions were not from the heart or brain of the lover, but were bought already beautifully printed for a good round sum. Louise turned over those addressed to her, with an air of calm indifference, as though all this incense was a matter of course, and nothing more than she *ought* to expect, but I thought she was somewhat disappointed in some way, though one of her's had a most valuable emerald ring in it. Ella, less accustomed to such sweet flattery, was in a flutter of delight, and evidently rose a hundred per cent in her own estimation. On opening one of her's, with its delicate lace border, she discovered a splendidly embroidered handkerchief within, which must have cost fifty or sixty dollars. The child gave a cry of delight, and has vowed, I believe, to marry the man, whoever he may be, that had the taste to send her anything so exquisite.

As I entered my dressing-room, a gush of fragrance met me, and I espied on my table one of the most perfect bouquets I ever beheld. I knew that uncle Hinton's gardener would never suffer his green-house to be robbed of such a wealth of beauty as that, for he is quite a tyrant in his own domain; and thinking the servant must have made some mistake in placing it in my room instead of Louise's, I was about to carry it in to her, therefore, when I found attached to it a card directed to "Miss Ada Lester." Oh, Maggie, emerald rings, embroidered pocket-handkerchiefs, and rapturous love verses were nothing compared to this beautiful floral Valentine. It was very large, and almost perfectly white. There were splendid, wax-like camillas, with a green leaf here and there; odorous daphnas, with their pale pink blush, having a perfume so subtle that it seemed to steal away one's senses; white rose-buds just opening, so that you could see far down into their very hearts; feathery laurustinus; and to crown the whole, a majestic white calla, that looked like velvet traced with silver veins, as I held it against the light.

I fairly bounced into the girls' room with it,

exclaiming, "look at my Valentine, look at my Valentine. *Isn't it exquisite?*"

Louise raised her eyes incredulously.

"For *you?*" asked she, with a shadow of a frown, I thought, on her fine brow. "Let me see."

And she examined, minutely, the card that was attached to it.

"Who can it be from?" I queried, excitedly, for I was really very much flattered by *this* tribute.

"Oh! from Mr. Blanchard, of course," said Ella, laughingly, "he is your most devoted cavalier, you know."

"What nonsense, Ella, why Ada scarcely knows Mr. Blanchard. You had better persuade her that he is in love with her at once," answered Louise.

"She knows him as well as she does any one else," returned Ella, "and he knows how very fond she is of flowers."

Louise made no reply, and I rather inclined to Ella's opinion, first, because Mr. Blanchard has been so kind to me since I have been here, and again because I know no one who has such an exquisite taste. Besides, *caro mio*, at that time, you know, he hadn't seen me asleep with my mouth open.

My bouquet still looks very fresh, and last night when Mr. Blanchard called, I took an opportunity in a casual way to speak of it, and say how much it had delighted me, for I thought that if he *had* sent it, it was but proper he should know how much pleasure he had given.

"Well, Ada," said Louise, when he had gone, "you may expect another bouquet soon, after your rhapsody. Even if Mr. Blanchard didn't send that, he cannot fail to think that another would be acceptable, and he is too gentlemanly not to take a hint." She spoke calmly and jestingly, but I could not fail to see that she was angry.

"I hope he *will* 'take the hint.' I know no one who would appreciate him or his flowers, more than myself," replied I, sharply.

In truth, dear Maggie, this fine lady cousin of mine, makes me feel so much like "the fretful porcupine," with her sarcasm and inuendoes, veiled under such calm politeness, that I could find it in my heart to pack up and be off home by the first opportunity, if I did not know how it would distress my uncle, who has set his heart upon carrying me back to C—; and I could give no reason for my hurry, for no one but myself can detect anything in all this but Louise's natural manner. I do wish I was at home though, Maggie!

Yours ever,                      ADA.

NEW YORK, February 28th.

THE winter is going out with a great flourish of trumpets, dear Maggie, and, as I write, the sharp sleet comes tinkling against the window-panes like thousands of needles, and the wind howls down the street most pitifully, like something human, as if it was the voice of all the sick and sorrowing and destitute ones combined. Not with the wierd sound which you and I know so well, that we used to listen to, half in awe, as it came from the dry tongues and long arms of the old elm trees around the house; the sound, you know, that on that winter twilight made the reading of the opening part of Macbeth so *erie*. Just like the fine overture to a fine opera. Not like that, dear Maggie, healthful to the spirit, with all its witch-like wildness, is the thousand tongued wind that comes over this great city. It seems to bear with it, wails from all breaking hearts; moans from the sick beds of little children; sighs and tears from oppressed widows and orphans; curses from the sick and famished, on those who raise not a hand to help them; horrible blasphemy from the lips of the lost, with no knowledge of a Saviour; to my fevered imagination to-day, it seems to me to carry all these to the foot of Jehovah's throne, laying them there for judgment.

All this perhaps is morbid, but I suppose it is produced by something which occurred the other evening, and a pale face and sad eyes have been haunting me ever since.

Nearly three weeks ago we all received cards for a large party at a Mr. Vernon's, one of the millionaires of New York. Everybody was to be there, that is everybody who is anybody in the fashionable world, and I have no doubt that many husbands and papas sighed over the notes of invitation, that were to turn their hard earned gold into new ball-dresses and sets of jewelry.

Uncle, who can well afford it, is most generous to my cousins. So when this party was under discussion one morning at the breakfast-table, he handed each of the girls and myself a bill of a large amount to buy any "gim-cracks," as he termed it, that we might want.

I of course refused the money, and protested that my new pink silk was quite good enough for me, and that I had worn it but twice; but uncle seemed so hurt because I would not accept it, that I rolled the money up without saying any thing more, but inwardly chafing at the obligation. His parting admonition to me, as he left the room, was, "remember, Miss Independence, you are to buy the handsomest dress you can find, and if with that and your saucy face, we can't get a husband for you, why I shall just

pack you off to your mother as worthless goods. Mind you! you are to outshine all the girls in the room."

"Get me a husband, indeed!" said I. "In the first place, uncle mine, I wouldn't be a woman if I couldn't get one for myself; and in the second I want a man, and not a tailor's advertisement. Get a husband from a fashionable party! why there isn't a man in New York that I would marry except yourself—if you weren't my uncle!"

Louise raised her eyebrows as only she can raise them, and asked, "are there no exceptions, Ada?"

I took no notice of the question, but went up stairs to prepare for the shopping expedition.

The whole morning was spent at Stewart's counters. Aunt Hinton selected a dove colored *moire antique*, with bouquets in silver thread; Louise a gold colored satin, over which was to be worn a superb black lace dress; Ella a delicate blue tulle, embroidered with silver; and I a plain white illusion, with a white satin underdress. I could not find it in my heart to spend all of my uncle's gift on one dress and its accompaniments, and my robe did not cost one-fifth of Louise's.

Aunt Hinton and Ella objected strenuously to my choice, it was so plain; but Louise decided with me, as she said I was of a style to which much dress was not becoming. I don't quite understand *ma belle cousine* yet!

Well, our purchases were carried to Madame Deschampe, who holds her vice-regal court in Broadway, and than whom there is not a better authority on dress this side of Paris! Madame, of course, was overflowing with work, all for the grand party; but our dresses were promised if she had to sit up all night to finish them.

A couple of nights before the party, the dresses were sent home; they were all beautiful; but to my notions, mine, the decoration of which I had left to madame's French taste, was really the most elegant, except, perhaps, Ella's.

The white illusion dress was made very full in the skirt, and floated around my person like a fleecy cloud, revealing gleams of the pearly satin, through it, with every motion. Depending from the waist on each side, down the skirt to below the knee, were long branches of the crimson trumpet creeper, with its golden stamen, and its green foliage made of crape, hanging gracefully in flexible tendrils; whilst accompanying the dress, was a *bouquet de corsage* and a head-dress of the same flowers, to correspond.

The whole effect was most beautiful, but imagine my vexation on trying it on, to discover that it was what I considered indecently low

in the neck. In vain they all protested that Madame Deschampe's unrivalled, indescribable "cut" would be spoiled by the alteration; the next morning I sent the dress back, to be made more respectable. Through all her politeness, I could see that madame thought me a fool and a prude, and in spite of her flattery with regard to my "magnifique buste," and "de tonoure of de shoulder," I very firmly said that if the dress was not altered I should not wear it. Somehow, when I am in earnest, people never seem to doubt me, and madame, really fearing that her bewitching dress would not flourish at "de grand parti," reluctantly consented to spoil it, in her estimation.

The party was to be on Thursday evening, and by dinner time on that day I was in some trepidation, as my dress had not yet returned from Madame Deschampe's; Mr. Blanchard was to be one of our escorts, and he has such an artist eye, that I was sure that my costume could not fail of meeting with his approval.

The night was terribly stormy. The sleet rattled like shot on the glassy pavements, and the wind sounded fearfully, even to us who were seated by warm fires, in thickly curtained rooms. Eight o'clock came, and the girls had already commenced the mysteries of the toilet, and I, with a good deal of disappointment, was laying my pink silk dress out to wear, when aunt came into my room and insisted upon sending James, the waiter, up to Madame Deschampe's. She had proposed this frequently during the afternoon, but I had argued that if my dress had been done, madame would most certainly have sent it home. Just then there came a feeble ring at the hall door, and I flew out anxiously and looked over the bannister, to see if it was the much-longed-for dress. James came up the staircase bearing a large, oblong basket, tightly covered with an oil-cloth, which I knew at once contained the desired article. I was about untying the strings of the cover, when I heard such a deep, hollow cough in the vestibule that it made me start. I called to James, who was already descending the stairs, to bid the person who brought it come up. He returned in a moment, and said it was *only a little girl*, and that her feet were so wet she did not like to tread on the carpet.

I left the basket in my room, and went down myself. Maggie, I shall never forget that poor pale face, and slightly clad, shivering form, as long as I live. I took her cold, ungloved hand, and without waiting for a word, I drew her along, saying, "Come up stairs to my room, my child—no matter about your feet."

The tears came now, when I think of her. I

forgot all about my dress, and hurriedly drew a low chair to the bright grate fire. "I am too wet, Miss, to sit down," said she, plaintively.

"So you are," replied I, not for her reasons though; but I was afraid she would catch cold; so I bade her take off bonnet, shawl, shoes and stockings; and soon had ramsacked my wardrobe to supply her with something dry. Dresses of course would not fit, but I took out a warm flannel skirt, dry shoes and stockings, a pair of overshoes, and my warm Rob Roy shawl which I travelled in. The poor little thing looked perfectly astonished, but never said a word, though great tears were rolling down her thin, white cheeks. I rang the bell when all that was done, sent the wet clothes down stairs, and ordered some hot tea to be brought to my room immediately.

The child could not have been more than thirteen years old, and had walked two miles, that dark, stormy night, to bring my dress home. You cannot tell how my heart smote me, and how ashamed I was of all my impatience. How paltry seemed my anticipated pleasure of the evening, compared with the terrible realities of this child's every-day life.

"Do you live far from here, sissy?" asked I, as I was again kneeling on the floor, busy with the strings of the basket cover.

"Yes, Miss, down in Anthony street." It was two miles at the very least, dear Maggie, from my uncle's Fifth Avenue residence.

I gave the dress a pull from the basket, tossed it on the bed, and went into my aunt's dressing-room.

"I came to ask a favor, aunt," said I, "and you are too kind, I know, to refuse me."

"What is it? but bless my heart, child, what's the matter? why I thought your dress came home half an hour ago. To be sure. Therese will be done here presently, and then she shall come and help you."

"Oh, it's not that," replied I, quickly, "I shall be ready all in time, but won't you let Thomas drive the poor little girl home that brought my dress, before he takes us to Mr. Vernon's? She lives away down in Anthony street, and has such a dreadful cough, that I am sure she can't live. And to think of her being out, and alone too, on such a stormy night." I felt my voice grow husky as I spoke.

"Dear me! how very dreadful, to be sure. Therese, that lappet falls too far back, you must alter it." And here, with an unchanged countenance, she pointed to a part of her head-dress, composed of blonde, that looked like a piece of fairy frost-work. I almost stamped my foot with

impatience. I waited a moment in silence, and then was about closing the door to find my uncle, in order to make an appeal to him, when she happened to see the reflection of my figure in the glass.

"Dear me, Ada!" exclaimed she, "I was so worried with my head-dress, I had forgotten all about that child. I don't expect Thomas will like it, but you are a great favorite with all the servants, so you can ask him if you choose," and she adjusted the plume which decorated the other side of her head, with all the anxiety of a young girl just about to make her *debut*.

I rang the bell for Thomas, put something in his hand, which I suspect made him forget it was a stormy night, (you can bribe a servant to anything here) and with the most elaborate reverences he assured me he would "carry the child home all comfortable."

I went back to my room and commenced my toilet with a somewhat lightened heart. The poor little girl was drinking the warm, fragrant tea eagerly, but every now and then she would pause, and fixing her large, sad eyes on the glowing fire, seem lost in reverie.

Whilst waiting for Thomas I gathered something of her history. Her mother is a widow, of the name of Richards, who takes in plain sewing, to support herself and her only child, though, as little Anna said, she could find enough work to do, but the ladies paid her so little, and sometimes didn't pay at all, that she could not live on it.

So Anna was considered fortunate to get a situation at Madame Deschamps's, as errand girl for the establishment, at a dollar a week, with some faint hopes of advancement as apprentice by-and-by.

"But," said I, "you are not strong enough, to be out in all kinds of weather, you should try to get some other situation, not so exposing."

"I was very thankful to get that, Miss," she replied, with a sad smile, "there are so few places that a girl of my age is fit for, and my wages are considered very good. We are very thankful, Miss, and if I was only well, we shouldn't mind."

Thankful! Maggie, this poor child for whom I already feel a kind of reverence, so near does she seem to me to be standing to the gates of Eternity; thankful for the dollar a week earned through cold and wet, fever, and racking coughs; thankful for the sum that nine-tenths of the fine ladies of New York squander, each day, for luncheon and bon-bons, at Thompson's saloons. God help them! they care not for the famishing sisters at their doors

In a little while the carriage was ready. I could not forbear stooping down and kissing the pale white forehead, as I wrapped the shawl around her. Tears came to her eyes, and her lips quivered as she said, "You are very kind, Miss. I'll start earlier to-morrow, to my work, and then I'll bring your things home."

"I don't want them," replied I, "you must keep them, for I have plenty more, and I am coming to see if your mother can do me some sewing. Here is something to pay you for your long walk," and as I put the money in her hand, I shall never forget the look of gratitude which the child cast upon me.

My elegant ball-dress afforded me no pleasure, in comparison with that "cup of cold water" given in His name.

A new world seemed to open to my view for the first time that night. I had never before so comprehended the *necessity* of the humanity of our Saviour, that the poor and sick in heart

could turn to Him, with the full assurance of His divine compassion, inasmuch that He "was in all points tempted like as we are," and that he is the great "High Priest, after the order of Melchizedek," making an expiation for our sins. A brighter halo seemed to glow around the lowly manger of Bethlehem, and the prayer-hallowed garden of Gethsemane. I thanked God that night, dear Maggie, in the name of all heart-broken, famishing souls, that our Redeemer had *suffered* in all things like as we do, and that he had not come clothed in purple and fine linen, and unapproachable majesty.

I was going to tell you about the ball at Mr. Vernon's, but I have no heart for it to-day, dear Maggie, with all these things crowding on me like a new revelation, and this wind sweeping down the street, bearing so many sorrows to our door.

I will write again in a few days, should nothing prevent.

Yours ever,                      ADA.

## A CURE FOR HYPOCHONDRIACS.

BY FITZ MORNEY.

"O-h-h-h—d-e-a-r!"

The walls of the dismal old room would, under common circumstances, have echoed the drowsy exclamation of the miserable, peevish, self-tormented hypochondriac, as he sat propped up by cushions in his easy-chair; but even the antiquated plastering had become so imbued with the laziness of the tenant, and the exclamation had acquired such a repugnant tone from age and reiteration, that the room was silent. The walls of the chamber were papered strangely, in accordance with the character of him who groaned without cause therein, being alternately a picture of a grim, old face, with a long beard and mouth drawn down like the arches of a bridge—an odd-looking coffin, originally intended to represent a cocked-hat—and an owl that sat on a dead log, looking for all the world as though he had the cramp in his left jaw, or was strangely blind in one eye. In one corner stood a side-board, with a complete assortment of bottles upon it—from the blue quart bottle down to the two-inch vial. On a table by the window, covered with a greasy black cloth, was a copy of Scott's Bible, with dust on it so thick that one might take his finger and write on its cover; and around it were standing more bottles. On the mantel a porcelain mandarin solemnly nodded his head, amid a gloomy array of—bottles. A light-stand stood near the invalid's chair, and all that one could discern of its surface was the interstices between the—bottles. And there sat the grunting old cancer on the face of society, with his bloated cheek lying on one shoulder—his fat hands folded calmly on his big belly, stuffed with all manner of luxuries—his feet resting on cushions—his eyes rolling imploringly from one side of his head to the other, and from one side of the room to the other—beginning at the portrait of his grandfather in one corner, and traveling from there over to the closet-door opposite, thence back to the portrait.

"O-h-h-h—d-e-a-r!"

He meant it to be very plaintive and gentle, that would-be wail, but one could almost hear it across the street. Reaching out his hand for his cordial, prepared by a quack, who wore huge spectacles, and whose hair stuck up stiffly all over his head, Oliver suddenly coughed. You think

it no matter if he did cough. Oliver would disagree with you; he feared it—worse than he ever did a tailor's bill in his younger days; for he could not cough without violently shaking himself; and knowing this, you will readily surmise that he shook himself now. He did. And the consequence was, he upset the light-stand, bottles and all, with a crash.

"Washington! Washington!" he bellowed, with all his stress of voice, which was by no means insignificant, as we have intimated, and which seemed to jar the walls, so that the portrait was in danger of descending to keep the light-stand company.

Straight way the door was thrown open, and a negro showed his polished countenance.

"What a want, massa?"

"Washington," wheezed out old Ferment, reproachfully, "why—don't—you—come—more—gently—when—I—call?"

"B'g p'dn, massa!" said Washington, pulling his woolly forelock.

"Big pudding, sir!" said Oliver, starting up, and turning completely round in his chair, with a gaze of astonishment—"what put into your head that I wanted a big pudding, sir? Say, who gave you authority to—ah—presume, eh?"

Washington returned the gaze, with interest.

"Why don't you answer me?"

"A—a—a, I'nt say n'fn about a puddin, sah! A—a—a—"

"Didn't, eh? Didn't?" and then sinking back in his chair, he whined—"oh, you wretch! it's lucky for you that your poor master's so weakly, or your impudence might cost you a chastisement. Oh, well, pick up them bottles, stove-pipe, and then run for Dr. Foolemall!"

With a groan Oliver sank back on his cushions to muse on his servant's expression, and to endeavor to comprehend what induced him to say big pudding. He thought it strange, very! He was sure he didn't want any pudding, at all—nor any mutton either, for that matter—for such a desire would be preposterous in one in his situation—a man whose feet had become encrusted with stone, and yet which were as tender as—chickens! What put that into his head? He was certain he couldn't tell. Chickens *were* tender—so was veal; but he didn't want any—not

he! A man in his condition—an invalid, war-  
chi—poh! he scouted the idea.

Washington soon departed on his errand, and ere long Dr. Foolemall entered the hypochondriac's apartment.

"O-h-h—d-e-a-r!" he sniveled, "I feel terribly to-day, doctor, terribly. I am afraid my legs are becoming encrusted as well as my feet. Oh! how horrid it is!"

"Poor man! poor man!" said Foolemall, sympathetically; "what will become of you? Let me see!" and stooping over, he felt of the extremities mentioned, "worse and worse, I find! The petrification is gradually encroaching upon the corporeal pomposities, and I fear that ere long the bivalvicious auricularius will become completely conglutinated. The hyphenugen is as ter-  
gious as a calcareous animalcule!"

"What's that?" groaned Oliver.

"Oh! excuse me, sir—will speak more plainly—we professional men become so—habitudinated—you understand, sir? I meant to say," he continued, tapping the leg with his fore-finger—"simply, hard as bricks!—or more properly adamant, sir. Resemble one faction of the Democratic party strongly—he! he! he!" attempting to be witty; adding in an under-tone, as he pretended to be busy with the bottles on the sideboard—"and his head resembles the other faction, I apprehend!"

"Doctor," said Oliver, "don't you think I had better discharge my present servant? He is getting so very impudent that I shall be ruined by him yet!"

"Discharge him? By all means!" said Foolemall; and pursued in a confidential tone, "fact is, my dear Ferment, I have long secretly wished that you would discharge him; fearing as I do, that his stupid bluntness will be the means of producing a very bad effect on your disorder. But I had not mentioned it, lest it might wound your feelings—not knowing what relations there might be existing between you and him."

"Re-la-tions!"

"Ah, don't mistake me, sir. Social relations; I alluded to—merely social relations!"

There was a pause, during which Foolemall took a phial from his pocket, and mixed up a draught. This operation completed, which Oliver had watched with anxious eyes, the professor of physic arose and repeated—

"Yes, sir, discharge him, sir! by all means discharge him!" and then giving a few directions he left, telling our hero to be careful and not let his legs get jarred.

Well, Washington was discharged. He shed a few "unavailing tears," and then bid the hypo-

chondriac a reluctant farewell, but taking care to provide against want by borrowing Oliver's well-filled pocket-book from the bureau-drawer, as he slept.

But soon another made his appearance—a Yankee, and, moreover, a perfect embodiment of wit and shrewdness. After having been in his master's employ for about two weeks, disgust overcame policy, and Zedekiah resolved to either cure his master's foibles, or incur a discharge from his service.

One morning as Zedekiah entered the room to brush it up and arrange the bottles; approaching the invalid's chair, he was as usual warned by that gentleman to beware lest he should hurt his legs.

"Well, now," said Zedekiah, coolly, "to come smack to the point; what in Jerusalem's the matter with yer ole legs, anyway?"

"Matter!" said Oliver; "what do you mean to insinuate, you rascal?"

"Oh! nothing—nothing at all, scarcely. I never inquired what was the matter, yu know! Thort I would, that's all!"

"Oh! yes!" said Oliver, much relieved, and then stooping over, he proceeded to elucidate to Zedekiah that his pedal extremities were encrusted with stone.

"The dickens they be!" said Zed, indignantly; "what! them legs? So's yer ole granny mustard and stone! Them legs is as perfect as mine, sir! Can't suck me! Hold on a minute! let's see how a knife 'll fit on 'em. Dare say it'll turn the edge—quickness greasenee lightning—I'll try!" So saying, Zedekiah produced a big jack-knife, sharpened to cut a hair. But Oliver stayed him in dismay.

"T-t-take care! Please understand that Dr. Foolemall says they must not be bruised or injured in any manner, lest the immediate petrification of the entire body ensue!"

"Oh! he says it'll *en-sue*, does he? Well, I'll risk it—I reckon *en-sue* don't mean happen—ef it does, I'll pay damages!" and with this he seized the astonished Ferment by the heels and dragged him out of his chair. Then grasping him by the neck he set him on his feet, and exclaimed—

"Wall! Don't *en-sue*, does it?"

"Miraculous preservation!" gasped Oliver.

"Miraculous granny!" said Zedekiah, as he retreated from the room, well satisfied with his management.

Zedekiah and Oliver had a private little conference next morning, which resulted in the following scene:—

About ten o'clock Foolemall visited his patient, and found him standing in the door.

"Ah! well—really! I am astonished! I am delighted to see you out this morning. Had not anticipated so pleasant a result for my prescriptions," said Foolemall, with a dolorous expression of would-be congratulation on his face.

"Zedekiah," said Oliver, sternly, looking calmly over the head of the quack at the Yankee, as he stood complacently smoothing his hair at the head of the stairway—"show the gentleman into the street!"

The oeculapian stammered out a few words of astonishment, but followed the Yankee to the door, and quickly descended the stately steps, assisted in the process by the broad toe of Zedekiah's boot.

Time flew. Zedekiah's remained with Ferment many months; but one day he told the old bachelor that he must leave him, and return to Vermont without delay. The intelligence was received with deep regret by Oliver, who tried his best to induce Zedekiah to remain. Finding all efforts in vain, he turned his attention to devising some means as a substitute for the faithful Yankee; and he and Zed laid their wits together, when the following conversation ensued:—

"Wall, Mr. Ferment," said Zed, "ef I ain't mistook, you know very well what is the cause of all your trouble!"

"Yes," responded Oliver, "I suppose I do.

It's all imaginary, I have not a doubt, but it's none the worse for that; and the hang of it is, I can't help it, unless I can have somebody near me—some one in whom I possess confidence—to keep me continually warned. Do you see?"

"I du," said Zed, looking intently at the floor, and sliding his pen-knife back and forth in his fingers; "yes, I du see—the fact; but no way to get round it; unless—unless you can get a good servant."

Exactly! But I can't do it. They're mere torments, as a class, and as such I always regard them. Consequently, I should soon find myself swearing at 'em, if they ventured to remind me of my weakness—and so, you see, I'd slide back!"

"I see," answered Zed, as he put his thumb aside his nose, apparently engaged in deep thought. "By turnip-tops!" he suddenly exclaimed, springing from his chair, "I've got it!"

"You have? Good! What is it?"

"It's all in three words, Mr. Ferment, three blessed words—*get a wife!*"

"Ho! ho! ho!" roared Oliver.

"Ha! ha! ha!" echoed Zed, slapping him familiarly on the back.

The advice was followed, dear reader, and—it answered. Oliver Ferment declares that he is now the happiest man that walks the planet called earth.

## MR. WAKELY'S MATCH-MAKING.

BY ELLA RODMAN.

On a pleasant morning in June, Mr. Wakely, the Episcopal clergyman at Middlebrook, (never mind the map) sat in his study, ostensibly engaged with some important papers, but in reality buried in a reverie of a very different nature. The lounging-chair near the window was occupied by a young lady, whose handsome features were clouded by an expression of the most intense ennui; and from over the leaves of the book in her hand she took sly peeps at Mr. Wakely, and wondered how he contrived to exist.

This, however, was not half so surprising as that Edith Cammersford, a fastidious helress, and something of a beauty beside, should have become the inmate of that country parsonage. She glanced from the window upon the substantial figure of Mrs. Wakely, who was a strong-minded woman, hurrying off to some Dorcas meeting, for the relief of somebody somewhere, and then remembered the three little Wakelys, turned out to pasture in the parsonage-grounds, who were fairly going to seed for want of a restraining hand. She looked up and down the principal street of Middlebrook, but every man who passed was square-shouldered, and had a sort of dogged look in driving oxen or pigs, as though he meant to pursue the same routine forever, and the idea of making a Webster of himself would never enter his head.

Edith was haunted by vague notions of farmers' boys studying by firelight, and composing poetry while following the plough; but now she began to think that "nature's nobleman" must have gone to a first-rate tailor. Her perfect independence was rather a dangerous gift in such hands; for being constantly on the look-out for rough diamonds, she would have bestowed herself and her fortune on any individual in whom she chose to fancy certain qualities that constituted her standard of perfection. No matter what he appeared to others—*her* preference was sufficient to raise him.

This somewhat head-strong young lady was an orphan, under the nominal charge of relatives, who stood too much in awe of their ward to interfere with any arrangements she might choose to make. So they contented themselves with observing that "Edith was queer" and followed

"The simple rule, the good old plan  
That they should take who have the power,  
That they should keep who can,"

and as the keeping of Edith was rather an impossible thing, if she had once made up her mind to go, their surprise at her announcement of an intention to visit her old friends, the Wakelys, was only expressed by an increased elevation of eyebrows, and a whispered wonder as to what Edith would do next.

Had she not refused De Lancy Brown, whom all the girls adored, and who was unexceptionable in every way, upon the silly plea that his vests were too bright, and his gold chains too heavy? And when he mentioned his intention of dying in consequence of her cruelty, hadn't she the rudeness to ask him if the place of his demise would be a debtor's prison? thus actually throwing the poor young man's misfortunes in his face! What *could* one expect from a girl like that? It was perfectly surprising that she should get on at all; but Edith *did* get on, as far as being made love to by everything in a hat and coat from seventeen to seventy comprises the term. She was perfectly sick of notes commencing with, "Dear Miss Cammersford," and ending with, "Yours, as you choose to determine"—she had a nervous horror of young men with long hair and wild eyes, who write verses—and flowers she shrank from as though they had contained the asp of the Egyptian queen. She was weary of this unvarying routine; and being taken with a sudden fancy for seeing how country ministers live, she accepted the Wakelys' often repeated invitation, and soon found herself buried in the retirement of Middlebrook.

She had now been there a week, and felt quite ready to exclaim, "Oh! solitude! where are thy charms?" for the place seemed like the palace that contained the Sleeping Beauty, or the island where Crusoe trembled to find the marks of another's feet.

Mr. Wakely, good, simple man! had suspended the composition of an electrifying sermon to ponder upon the means of amusing his guest; and at the identical moment at which he is introduced, he had been favored with an idea so much to the purpose that he wondered it had never occurred to him before. Beside, he felt

an ambition to perform a marriage ceremony, in which his part should include something more than the usual questions, "Wilt thou have this man?" &c. In short, the quiet, unworldly Mr. Wakely had been suddenly seized with a match-making mania of the fiercest kind. That Edith must be disposed of at the shortest possible notice appeared to strike him as a sort of moral necessity—but who was to be the favored individual?

Mr. Wakely's recipe for a match would doubtless have been: equal quantities of everything, whatever it is; and under the influence of this impression his choice was soon made. His cousin, Tom Hamilton, had always appeared to him a high and shining mark in various ways; and his feelings toward this paragon were precisely of that nature which a sly, distrustful, *good* character entertains for one who, with more of earthly dross, makes his way through every difficulty with a combination of talent, assurance, and good looks, that is perfectly irresistible. Tom, although considerably his junior, had from early boyhood succeeded in impressing his retiring cousin with a perfect conviction that whatever he did was done better than any one else could do it; and Mr. Wakely instantly decided that he was just the one for Edith.

His ideas upon the subject were arranged very much like a merchant's account of "profit and loss;" for he sat and reasoned thus: "Nothing could possibly be better, they were so exactly matched in everything; Edith was handsome and haughty-looking—so was Tom; Edith had quite a fortune in her own possession—so had Tom; Edith was talented and intellectual—so was Tom; Edith would brook no opposition—neither would Tom; Edith rode beautifully, could drive splendidly, and despised cowardice—so did Tom; Edith talked a great deal and talked elegantly—so did Tom; Edith had a sort of way with her so though she knew herself to be superior to every one else—so had Tom; Edith despised moping and quiet pleasures—so did Tom; were not the two made for each other? It never entered the good clergyman's head that between two bodies so equally charged in every respect there must be a grand collision; there was no originality in either character into which some originality of the other might fit like a well-assorted puzzle—all was straight, and square, and even.

Mr. Wakely roused himself from his reverie to prepare for a journey. Of course, he had only to say to Tom, "My dear cousin, I wish you to come home with me and fall in love with Miss Cammersford, a very charming friend of mine," and that accommodating young gentleman

(although never before remarkable for docility) would rub up his susceptibility, pack his carpet-bag, and, on seeing Edith, instantly subscribe himself, "Yours, to command"—thus remembering the excellent precept instilled in the nursery, "Come when you're called, and do as you're bid." As for Edith, Mr. Wakely arranged her behavior as though he had been writing a story, in which she was the heroine, and Tom Hamilton the piece of walking perfection whom fate had assigned to her as a lover.

Without imparting to any one a word of his intentions, Mr. Wakely went to the city, ostensibly on business—but in reality to capture Tom, if possible, and carry him off to Middlebrook. Tom Hamilton's nominal residence was in the gay metropolis; but being very much addicted to aimless wanderings, and walkings to and fro upon the earth, he had left town that very morning upon a fishing excursion. He might, however, return in a day or two; and the country clergyman concluded to accept the invitation of numerous friends, and enjoy the interval in sight-seeing.

Edith arrayed herself in a fresh white dress with a great many yawns, and thought, as she twisted some fuchsia blossoms in her rich, dark hair, that she could sympathize with the feelings of actresses when they perform to empty benches. Still, there was a sort of satisfaction in making herself look as lovely as possible, if only for her own edification; and after two or three somewhat unnecessary glances at the mirror, she descended to the parlor, almost wishing that she could find it occupied by even a middle-aged minister.

She seated herself by the window, around which the roses formed a natural trellis-work, and merely from the want of other objects of interest, watched the movements of the old, lumbering stage that diurnally dragged its unwieldy proportions through the village of Middlebrook. It stopped in the middle of the dusty road; and Mrs. Wakely watched the result with anxious eyes. That worthy woman was not partial to visitors who came in family groups, and she had for sometime past been haunted by a vague fear of a cousin who counted at least seven olive branches; but, with a sigh of relief, she exclaimed, "It is Sidney, I do believe!" and ran to the door.

Edith caught a glimpse of the visitor's back, and noticed a very rusty-looking coat; but she did not see the face that was turned toward Mrs. Wakely, or the beaming smile with which he greeted his aunt. She scanned his attire narrowly, and saw that his gloves were ripped in various places—that his boots had been selected

more with a view to use than ornament—and soon decided that he was entirely unacquainted with the inside of any fashionable tailor's establishment. Still *any* kind of a man in that lonely place was something; and when the new arrival was introduced to Edith as Mr. "Colbrook," that haughty young lady favored him with an examining glance, as though he were some newly-discovered specimen of the human family submitted to her inspection.

He was as much surprised at the sight of Edith as a traveller would be to find a princess in a hovel; and the heiress felt quite provoked at herself as the color rose to her cheek under his admiring glance. He certainly *had* fine eyes, and his face was something quite different from what she had ever seen before; still, Edith was quite sure that, had any one else been present, she would not have noticed him.

She was mistaken—from a character like herself Sidney Colbrook would have received notice anywhere. He had one of those countenances that are generally grave, as though the rough realities of life had overshadowed the joyousness of youth, and yet light up with a smile that seems like sunshine on a cloudy day. Edith felt interested; she could see that he was poor, and to the potted heiress poverty stood first in the catalogue of misfortunes. These thoughts passed through her mind as she sat with downcast eyes, strewing the floor with rose-leaves: and quite unconscious of her condescension, Mr. Colbrook talked to his aunt, and caressed the children who all clustered around "cousin Sidney." Edith retired that night with a new subject of contemplation—little deeming, from his quiet manner, that her image was making sad havoc with Mr. Colbrook's slumbers.

The white morning dress (Edith was partial to white dresses) was arrayed with more than usual care, and decorated with a half-blown rose; and the poor young lawyer sighed over his poverty for the fiftieth time, as the lovely vision of Edith Cammersford entered the breakfast-room. Unusually quiet, the heroine sipped her coffee in silence; but her eyes were irresistibly drawn to the glowing face of her opposite neighbor, as he described in eloquent terms the scenes through which he had lately passed: and although he was rather overgrown for a protegee, Edith felt a strong desire to shape the destiny of Sidney Colbrook, and help him on his way with the golden key that seldom fails to unlock every difficulty. Talking, however, was not Sidney's forte; and he shrank back into his usual gravity, except when the brilliant sallies of Edith called forth a smile, while, flattered by the admiring

attention of those earnest eyes, the heiress rattled on in one of her gayest moods.

Before breakfast was over, Mr. Colbrook seemed quite like an old friend; and as they stood looking over Mr. Wakely's books together, Edith suddenly exclaimed, as she rested her white hand on an old, rusty-looking volume.

"I have been very much interested in some sketches in this old magazine, that seems to have been published at college many years ago—they all have the signature S. C., but having read one, I could easily identify the others from the exquisite purity of style and elegance of language that characterizes them all."

There was a deep flush on the face of Sidney Colbrook as he took the book from her hand, and it occurred to Edith that he must be the author. He saw her eyes fixed upon him with an expression of admiring interest; and extremely confused, he replaced the volume and spoke of something else.

But Edith was now quite satisfied that Sidney Colbrook was well worth studying; and resolving to examine through a pair of spectacles that should point out every flaw, if there were any, she commenced the task in earnest. Moonlight seems to cast a sort of halo over *every* face, but under this silvery veil the features of Sidney Colbrook acquired an expression of lofty thought and high purpose, like that sometimes seen in the finest productions of the chisel; and as Edith wished to study him in every light, it was perfectly natural to take moonlight walks. Mrs. Wakely never had time for "such nonsense." Our heroine was not in the least aware that she had donned a pair of spectacles of a very different nature from what she intended; and every time that she mentally applauded Mr. Colbrook's sentiments, she smiled benignantly upon herself for being so sharp-sighted.

Mr. Wakely spent two or three days very pleasantly; but time passed, and his hero came not. At last, he despatched a letter, setting forth the case in the most natural manner, and inviting him to come to Middlebrook, and dispose of himself as soon as possible. That accomplished, he went home, perfectly convinced that Tom would lose no time in following.

But master Tom happened to be engaged in a particularly interesting concern of his own, and his cousin's very unexpected letter excited a smile that soon deepened into a hearty laugh.

"So exactly like Jerry!" said he, "all his geese are swans, and this unknown beauty and heiress is probably some hum-drum damsel with a few thousands in her own possession. However, if she were Venus and Croesus combined,

it would be nothing to me, now, and what do I care for money?"

Here he glanced from the window of his apartment in the comfortable hotel, and became quite absorbed in some object of interest.

As Mr. Wakely approached the parsonage on his homeward route, he very naturally began to look about him for familiar objects; but it was with a sensation of most pleasurable surprise that he beheld the graceful figure of Edith, accompanied by a gentleman whose identity at first puzzled him. But then how could he be so stupid? Who could it be but Tom, who had hastened hither on the wings of the wind, and fairly outstripped the speed of the puffing locomotive that had rolled so lazily along?

Jumping at conclusions was the only performance in which our worthy clergyman manifested any degree of quickness; and he now mentally rubbed his hands with delight at what he deemed the success of his scheme. But, alas! he soon realized the enchantment lent by distance; for, just as he would have bestowed upon Tom an embrace to assure him of his perfect satisfaction, the glowing face of Sidney Colbrook met his eyes, and his hand was wrung with an intensity of fervor that would have expressed the deepest gratitude on the part of his nephew, had there been the least occasion for any.

Mr. Wakely noticed rather uneasily the glance with which the young lawyer's eyes were constantly seeking Edith's; and it was in a state of considerable bewilderment that he entered the house. What had become of Tom? And what could possess his nephew to come just then? Mr. Wakely was beginning to see through things; and from the manner in which he used his eyes that evening, a stranger would naturally have inferred that he had been blind all his life before.

"I cannot imagine," said the puzzled clergyman, when he and Mrs. Wakely were left in quiet possession of the best parlor, "why Sidney should have taken it into his head to make us a visit just now—it is very strange!"

"People generally do go into the country in summer," replied Mrs. Wakely, who was somewhat matter-of-fact, "it does not seem to me half so strange to come in cherry-season as if he had waited until December. Edith is here."

"That makes it still more singular," observed her husband, unconsciously speaking his thoughts aloud.

Mrs. Wakely thought differently, but she only purred up her mouth with the resolute manner of one who had an important secret that she would not for the world divulge. Mrs. Wakely was firmly convinced that she was making a

match; and if Edith became Mrs. Sidney Colbrook, it would be entirely owing to *her* excellent management, and Sidney ought to be everlastingly grateful to her for advancing his interests. The good woman had floating visions of a silver breakfast-service as the reward of modest merit; for she owned to this little vanity, clergyman's wife though she was.

The heiress, in the meanwhile, followed her own inclinations, as usual, without troubling herself in the least about the opinions of others; and Sidney was too much absorbed in a blissful dream to notice that he had become an object of the deepest interest. For Mr. Wakely contemplated his nephew in surprise, and wondered that he had never been struck by his perfections before. He was now convinced that Sidney was one of those rare beings who can triumph even over the disadvantages of poverty; and when he heard him talk to Edith, he no longer marveled that the fastidious young lady should listen with every appearance of pleasure.

Edith strolled into the hall, one morning, when she knew that Sidney was engaged for sometime in copying a poem for her, and there, on the table, lay the straw hat which but a short time ago she would have pronounced "vile." No other man *could* look decent without being properly thatched; but this combination of straw was really a triumph over hatters. She turned it over with a sort of reverence, and a pair of black gloves fell to the floor.

Edith was not given to pressing such things to her lips—her conduct was much more rational, for she examined the ripped seams, and formed the benevolent resolution of repairing them with her own fair fingers. In five minutes more, she was seated on the cane sofa, with gloves and sewing implements; and she smiled to herself as she pictured Sidney's surprise on finding them mended. Of course, he would not be able to imagine who had done it.

It so happened, in the perverse order of things, that, before the gloves were finished, Sidney came down stairs and was seized with a sudden desire for those very articles, that threw Edith into a most alarming state of not-know-what-to-do-ativeness. In vain she concealed the gloves, and tried to look unconscious; a tell-tale color overspread her face, and the haughty heiress felt very much like a naughty child detected in some misdemeanor.

One of the black fingers peeped forth from its hiding-place; and, as if to prove the fact that man is an insatiable animal, it suddenly entered the gentleman's head that, since the beautiful heiress had mended his gloves once, she might

possibly be willing to perform that office for him during the term of her natural life. So he threw himself upon the mercy of the court, which seemed to be situated near Edith's feet, and pleaded his suit so eloquently that he gained the first cause he had the good fortune to try.

One of the little Wakelys, who had taken a peep at the scene, declared that "Cousin Sidney had tumbled down in the hall, and Miss Cammersford was trying her best to pick him up." Mr. Wakely did not move to offer assistance, although the expression of his face plainly implied that he anticipated the most serious consequences. Mrs. Wakely looked triumphant; for the good woman really thought that she had made a match. How much she had done for Sidney! And she tried to think of some other deserving individual whom her foresight might direct to draw a prize in the lottery of matrimony.

The next morning Mr. Wakely sat wondering over Tom's non-appearance, and pondering upon the excuse he should offer, when he *did* arrive, for having deluded him so far under false pretences, when a letter, with the well-known flourishes, directed to the "Rev. Jeremiah Wakely," was placed upon his study-table. The clergyman's face, as he proceeded in its perusal, was a perfect exclamation note; and well it might be, for to those initiated in Tom's style of writing it ran thus:

"MY VERY DEAR COUSIN—

"Are you not ashamed of yourself, clergyman that you are, to be holding out temptations of strange women to me who am as good as private property? Oh, Jerry! If you could but see! But never mind—you *shall* see, one of these days; for the present, you must be content with hearing. I have found the sweetest little violet of a wife in this out-of-the-way place that you can possibly imagine—violets, you know, always do grow in sequestered nooks. I am really getting quite poetical; but when I wish to speak of Lillias, it seems to me like sacrilege to think of anything less refined than flowers or stars. I am almost afraid to indulge myself too much in looking at her, for fear that she will melt away, like a snow-flake, beneath my gaze.

"But I suppose that I must tell you how I found her: I came out here to fish, (nicely the tables have been turned, by the way—I hope the fishes enjoy their revenge) and somebody told me to be sure and put up at Harry Bruce's—the only hotel out here that is worthy of the name. I followed this advice, (that fellow deserves public honors) and found myself as pleasantly situated

as one could desire. The truth is, setting vanity aside) such stray stars as myself don't often wander into this sphere, and when friend Harry saw me, he acknowledged my superiority at once. The best room—the cream of the house in every thing was at my disposal; and I began to experience the exquisite pleasure which modesty *does* now and then enjoy—that of being appreciated.

"The next morning, as I was making my toilet for breakfast, I heard voices in the adjoining room—one easily recognizable as that of mine host, the other so sweet and low that I almost stopped breathing to catch the silvery accents. 'Listening, Tom! I hear you exclaim, 'shame on you!' 'Guilty, my lord,' but if I were not, perhaps you would never have heard this interesting story.

"Oh, father!" said the voice, 'I really cannot go to the table before those strange men—do spare me this!'

"Now, Lillias," replied the deep tones of Mr. Bruce, 'no more of this nonsense, if you please—these are your fine, boarding-school airs. The strange men, of whom you are so dreadfully afraid, happen to be your father and one young gentleman from the city, who arrived last night, and to whom I wish to show all possible attention. All that I ask of you is to pour out coffee for us, and look as pretty and amiable as usual—no great hardship *other* girls would think.'

"Yes," thought I, as I cast an *accidental* glance in the mirror, 'Miss Lillias will certainly be rewarded if she *does* come,' and I mentally pronounced myself a very good-looking fellow.

"That was *before* I entered the breakfast-room; when I found myself opposite a fair vision in a pink gingham dress, I wondered if I bore any resemblance to the ogre who is always represented in fairy tales as devouring little children. I found my hands too many for me—my feet seemed made for no earthly purpose but to be in the way—and, in short, if Harry Bruce had just then opened a trap-door and let me down out of sight, I should have been eternally grateful to him.

"A pair of deep blue eyes stole a timid glance around, from behind the burnished coffee-urn—long, golden ringlets drooped over a fair young face—and two of the sweetest little hands in the world trembled visibly in dispensing the steaming coffee. I drank it as though it had been nectar handed by Hebe. Nothing could I extract from my fair neighbor beyond a timid 'yes,' or 'no, sir,' and if she met my glance her face was like sunset on a bed of snow.

"As soon as possible, she made her escape; and in a very indifferent frame of mind as to

whether I had a bite or not, I seated myself by the pretty lake, and pondered on the mysterious occurrences of the morning. For mysterious it certainly was to find such a vision of beauty and refinement in a country hotel, far away from the usual haunts of civilization; and I wondered how the riddle would be solved.

"A lazy-looking countryman lounged up to me, and in an interrogatory tone, observed, 'Fishin', stranger?'"

"I nodded an assent, fully prepared for a string of questions.

"'Stayin' at Harry Bruce's, I s'pect?'"

"'I 's'pected' that I was.

"'Seen his darter, may be?'"

"I turned around at this. 'What do you know of her?' said I.

"My would-be companion took advantage of this condescension to give me a somewhat staggering blow on the back, and then burst into a hearty fit of laughter. I wish some of our city people could have seen that man laugh. It was a perfect explosion, and reminded me of Sam Weller's fears for his father, when indulging in a similar luxury.

"'I thought I'd wake you up,' said he, at last, 'but it is queer, now, ain't it? You see,' he commenced, seating himself in a confidential manner, 'Miss Bruce died when Miss Liliass was quite a little shaver—and Harry, not knowin' what else to do with the young un' clepped her at boarding-school in the city. The fine madam who tuk care on her larned her a'most everythin' that warn't worth larnin'—and when Harry came to fetch her home, Miss Liliass was quite amazed like to find out where she lived. She ain't got used to our ways yet, and the very best thing that Harry can do with her is to wrap her up in cotton, and have her sot in a glass-case. A great shape she is for the country—a good, high wind might take her clean off.'"

"My heart felt sad, I can tell you, as I pictured the daily trials of this young girl, so differently brought up, exposed to the companionship of such as the specimen before me; and in a very short time I was decidedly in love. Liliass, however, retreated as I advanced, and encased herself in a shell of such impenetrable reserve that I almost despaired of obtaining the least notice.

"I never admired your dashing women—I hate great talkers—and it makes me perfectly nervous to be in company with girls who know a little of everything. Last winter I met a Miss Cammersford, a beauty and heiress, whom obliging friends were perfectly determined that I should marry—'she was just the one for me.' But the great, brown eyes of the queenly Edith seemed perpe-

tually flashing defiance at me—a challenge to beat her if I could. She could ride as well as I—she could drive, I believe, four in hand—and she could talk down the greatest pedant in the universe. I might as well have made love to my own shadow; and as to our being *one*, I am afraid that *one* would have been Edith.

"Liliass, to my great delight, is afraid of horses, says very little, and is one of those gentle creatures who seem made to be waited upon and admire their husbands. I have frightened her half to death by telling her that I love her to distraction—that she *must* be mine—and that I only wait for a word from her to blow my brains out. Harry tells me, in confidence, that he thinks she will prevent this catastrophe; but the proud little monkey keeps herself at such a distance, that, for want of more attractive metal, I was obliged to bestow an ecstatic hug upon my father-in-law elect.

"Wont all the relations be hopping, though, when they hear of my back-sliding? But 'papa' has consented to give up his hotel—and if any injurious facts *should* leak out, why should he not be added to the crew of interesting widows who take boarders for company, and teach school for amusement? This letter is *long* enough to satisfy; and having, I hope, convinced you how very inconvenient it would be for me to come on and fall in love with your paragon, accept my last adieu as a singular pronoun."

Edith had intended to keep her engagement private, but love, like murder, will out; and she was obliged, at last, to understand Mrs. Wakely's significant looks, and still more significant observations.

"Sidney," said Mr. Wakely, as he wrung his nephew's hand, "you will be a happy man. I had destined your treasure for some one else—but—there, just read that letter."

The eyes of the bridegroom elect sparkled with their most mischievous expression as they travelled over Tom's effusion; and as those may laugh who win, his uncle's ear was soon greeted with an outburst of laughter that was really aggravating.

"He really must tell Edith;" and the two laughed, in concert over Mr. Wakely's uncereimonious disposal of his visitor.

"Poor man!" said Edith, while her bright eyes were almost tearful with merriment, "it must be a little disappointing, though—do let us see if we cannot console him."

"Ye!" Was there ever a sweeter word? The lover gallantly lifted a fair hand to his lips, and the two composed their faces to a proper degree of regret as they entered the study.

"Mr. Wakely," said the musical voice of Edith, "I am afraid that you have been very much disappointed in me, for I am sorry to say that I should have regarded your cousin in the light of a lover with very much the same sentiments that he entertains toward me. Still, I cannot but be grateful for the trouble that you have taken on my account—and if you will consent, you really *shall* marry me, but it must be to one who can appreciate such a treasure."

↳ Late in the autumn, Mr. Wakely performed two marriage ceremonies; and when he caught a glimpse, through her bridal veil, of the lovely features of Mrs. Tom Hamilton, he wondered not that his match-making project had fallen to the ground like a castle in the air

· It was at this marriage that he made a resolution, which he has since scrupulously kept, of never again interfering in other people's affairs—particularly when they happen to be what the

fortune-tellers call "affairs of love and marriage."

Among the late arrivals at the Metropolitan were the "Hon. Sidney Colbrook and lady"—the talented and distinguished Senator from Georgia. *There* he won for himself a name and a position; for, when pleading his first important case to a crowded court, "the great, brown eyes of the queenly Edith," of which Tom Hamilton spoke so disrespectfully, led him on in his eloquent defence of the *right*, until the very walls of the room shook with applause, and every head in the assembly was thrust eagerly forward to get a glimpse at the excited lawyer.

He bowed, and his eyes were eloquent with gratitude—but they sought the face of Edith; and like words set to sweet music were those that evening whispered in the ear of his wife.

"My own! my guiding star! Behold what *thou* hast made me!"

## "DON'T THE LAMBS GO TO REST AT NIGHT?"

BY PHILA EARLE.

Yes, little one, the lambs do go to rest at night; and the angels must have whispered that blessed thought to you, as they folded their silver wings around you, to take you to your rest. Beautiful must have been the words they breathed to you, and sweeter their tones, than any to which mortals ever listened; for a saintly smile lingered around your pale lips, as they kissed down the blue-veined lids over your eyes, and left the shadow of their white, snowy wings on your fair, young brow. What though tearful ones gathered around the bedside, and smothered sobs gushed up from anguished hearts? What though the death-dews rested damply on your polished brow, what though the struggling breath came shortly, gaspingly through the white tremulous lips—were you not going a lamb to your rest?

It was at the close of a beautiful sunny day, when the golden sunbeams were fading from the hill-tops, and smiling a good-night to vine-o'-er-covered valleys, dreamy streamlets, and waving forests, when the warbling birds hush their joyous songs, and the stillly hour draws nigh, when memories of the olden-time come stealing into the heart, and we listen in fancy to voices long since silenced, gaze into eyes long ago darkened, and feel the pressure of hands that grew cold and motionless, many and many a year ago; and we dream again the dreams that once made life seem ever so fair and beautiful, golden-hued and bright. It was such an hour, precious one, that grief-stricken friends drew nearer to your bedside, for they knew the gates of heaven were opened to receive their cherished one, and the conviction fell chillingly on their hearts that you were dying.

For many weary, painful days, you had lain weak and suffering, and loving ones would fain have sheltered you in their hearts, and shielded you from so much agony, as you lay on your little couch tossing restlessly, while a burning fever crimsoned your face, and the warm life-blood rushed wildly through your throbbing veins. In vain did they bend tearfully over you, and gaze pityingly on the flushed face, and painfully beating temples. But now it was all still; the purple blood retreated to the heart, and a coldness crept over you. The departing

sunbeams crept through the partially closed shutters, and fell warmly and softly on your dark waving hair, which was brushed gently back from your pale forehead. Meekly your little hands were folded over your faintly heaving bosom, and your large, black, spiritual eyes were turned toward the fading sunlight, which seemed to spread a halo of glory around you. Slowly the white quivering lips parted, and murmured, in broken whispers, "Don't the lamb go to rest at night?" Blessed child! Even while the words trembled on your lips, the angels bore thee heavenward—a lamb to be folded to the bosom of the great and merciful Shepherd.

"Dead," moaned the stricken mother, with hands clasped tightly over her throbbing heart, as if to still its anguished beatings, "dead, oh! my beautiful boy," and she wept bitterly in the desolation of her heart. "Nay, a lamb gone to rest," whispered the good pastor, soothingly, and in a low, solemn voice, he uttered a prayer for the bereaved. For oh! how desolate and lonely their home would be. How would they miss the light of those beautiful eyes, and the joyous, ringing laugh that was ever on the lip? How would they miss the light bounding footstep, and the clear musical voice, and turn sadly from the vacant chair? God help you, fond parents, and give your submissive hearts to think calmly that your darling has passed away to the Eden-land, in his lamb-like purity and innocence. The Father sent his angels to gather him, an opening bud, to unfold its tiny leaves with blossoms long since transplanted to heaven. In his happy, sinless childhood, while yet the rose-leaves, which were scattered along his early pathway, grew fresh and fair beneath his lightsome tread, and he had never rested heavily enough upon them to have the thorns pierce them through. While the sunbeams of a few golden summers had fallen on his forehead lightly, and ever so warm and sunny, and nestled softly among the dark locks that clustered around his temples. While gushing up from the heart smiles lingered around his lips, and tears had never dimmed the lustre of his jetty eyes. While buds of hope twined in the garland that fancy was wreathing for him, and shadows and blights had never fallen on their brightly unfolding leaves.

Angel child! Before you had grown earth-weary, or way-worn, or the cares and sorrows of life rested heavily on your spirit, your's plumed its ethereal wings, and soared away to the spirit-home. And they laid you away among singing birds, and fragrant flowers, with rose-buds in your folded hands. And the balmy zephyrs, and perfume-laden mist-winds go sighing softly, plaintively over the green turf that is laid over you, where dewy tears lie gently on the tiny leaves of bright green grass. And the blue sky bends over all, with its fleecy sunlit clouds, and the moonlight falls on your still grave, with a pale and silvery gleam, in the stillly hush of twilight, while the stars down-gaze with their meek, holy eyes.

'Tis a beautiful spot, little one, for lambs to go to rest, and there's many and many a one gone from aching hearts to sleep there; for the quiet night-fall often comes when angel voices call them one after another to their holy, dreamless, tranquil rest.

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## THE PHANTOM OF THE BOTTOMLESS LAKE.

BY MRS. COROLLA H. CRISWELL.

## I.

It was a wilderness of dwarf trees and tangled briars.

The young sportsman, advancing, slowly and with difficulty pushed aside the branches, and making his way between them, stood on the border of a large pond or lake, perhaps some ten miles in circumference. The water was nearly black and perfectly still—and around it as far as his eye could reach, the young man saw but the same interminable wilderness of bushes and briars. It was an isolated and a desolate spot, fit haunt for spirits of evil. The waters of this lake were unfathomable.

The sun was far on the decline—and a deep shadow fell around the spot where stood the sportsman. A strange shudder came over him as he seemed chained to the damp turf under his feet—his gun slid from his shoulder to his side—his arms became nerveless; had his life depended on the act, he could not have raised them—and thus he remained, awe-struck, bewildered and motionless until the sun had set, and deep, dismal darkness settled around him.

Then, apparently from the centre of the lake, there arose the shape of a human finger, perfectly defined, yet luminous, shining with a sort of phosphorescent light. At first it remained motionless, but as the young man's gaze continued fixed upon it, it moved slowly toward him, pointing in the same direction, until it came so near that it almost touched him. As it passed his cheek, a deadly chill shocked his whole frame; and in obedience to a power inexplicable as it was mysterious, he turned and followed the phantom finger. Onward it led him—through the briary thicket into a wild and barren plain—then over rocks and brooks and stone walls into a mighty forest. Rudolf, for such was the youth named, was perfectly aware of the nature of every place he passed through, although all was midnight darkness around him, save the light emitted by his fiery guide.

Onward through the waving and creaking forest went Rudolf, his gun clenched in his hand, until suddenly he found himself in an open plain; and in a few minutes more he was standing on the threshold of a large building. The fiery finger

had disappeared—but the door stood open, and the youth entered mechanically.

In the wide vestibule hung a dim lamp, the faint rays of which showed him another door half shaded by a crimson curtain. Rudolf hesitated not to step onward, and found himself in a superbly furnished parlor lighted by three splendid chandeliers depending from the frescoed ceiling. While he stood gazing around him with wonder and admiration, he was startled by the tones of a voice sweeter than a fairy melody—

"Stranger! what wouldst thou?"

Turning quickly around, his eyes fell upon a young lady, not more than twenty, elegantly attired, and most beautiful. He endeavored to reply to her, but his voice failed him. Smiling at his apparent awe, she resumed—"fear not! I am no fairy. Lay aside your fowling-piece—seat yourself and tell me what brought you hither."

She spoke so kindly and sweetly that Rudolf was charmed beyond measure. In obedience to her commands, his hat and gun were laid aside, and seated near the lady, he began in these words:

"My name is Rudolf. I dwell many miles from here with an aged uncle and my only sister. I have no other relatives.

"I left home this morning, as is my custom at this season, to hunt among the hills and through the forests. I had no luck to-day, which is a very unusual thing with me—and had gone farther than I had intended, when I came to a lonely spot—a dismal lake. I could not go from the place where my eyes first rested on it—and so remained until the darkness gathered around me. Then, from the water rose a finger of fire—it passed me—and, in spite of myself, I followed it a weary way, through fields, over brooks, stone walls, and a deep, dark forest, until it brought me hither. That is all I can tell you, lady."

She had listened to him with intense interest in her soft and pensive eyes—and when he finished, drew a deep sigh.

"Listen to me now, Rudolf. Three years ago, I was a blythe and happy girl in this, my childhood's home. An aged father was my only protector, my only friend. I had many suitors, but as I cared for none, I would not marry—and my father never urged me to do so.

"At last there came one who was no longer young, and far from good-looking or agreeable: indeed, he was the very opposite—and he wished to make me his wife. I recoiled at the idea—and my father would not listen to his proposals.

"One day my father went from home—and—and—*never returned*." Here the young lady could not repress her tears, and Rudolf, almost unconsciously, took her small hand in his own and pressed it sympathizingly. Irena started and drew it from him—but continued:

"The next night, Guentín, the man I mentioned, came to me accompanied by a priest and a black man—and in spite of my tears, and cries, and prayers, forced me to marry him. Since that hour I have been kept closely confined to these chambers, and, in very fear of death, obliged to submit to the caresses of a man my soul abhors. No human being ever enters these doors save *him* and the black man, his confidential servant. As for the rest, I am supplied with every luxury, but condemned to a life of wretchedness. More than this—I have good reasons for suspecting that Guentín is a robber, a bandit."

## II.

SHE was silent—and Rudolf remained for a few minutes wrapt in thought. "How strange!" he at length exclaimed. "Fair lady! would that I could do aught to serve you."

"Perhaps you can," she returned, with so sweet a smile that it warmed him to the heart. "But," continued Irena, "you must be hungry as well as weary—I will get you some refreshment." So saying, she left the room for a few minutes, but returned bringing with her a tray filled with delicacies, and also a flask of wine.

"Thanks! lady, thanks!" said Rudolf. Then, as if a sudden thought had struck him, he resumed—"I hope there is no danger to you or to myself in my remaining here. Do you think so?"

"I think not. There is no one in the house but ourselves, and the doors are all secured. To make you more at your ease, however, I will bolt the doors of this apartment." She rose as she spoke, and having made them fast, returned to the side of the youth and helped him to partake of the contents of the tray. The moments glided by, uncounted, and they still remained conversing on the strangeness of Irena's fate, never noting that the old time-piece on the mantel had chimed midnight.

At length it occurred to them both that they were doing wrong to converse together so familiarly, when but a little time previous they were perfect strangers—and then, this very consciousness told them that a strange, magnetic power had

bound their hearts together, in plain language, that they were in love with each other.

He took her hand, and it was not withdrawn. "I must leave you—I must go back to my home," he said, sadly.

They were startled by the opening of a window, seemingly in the adjoining room. Rudolf sprang to his feet.

"Oh! fly! fly!" cried Irena, in terror, "it must be *him*—my husband! Heavens! we shall be murdered." And she wrung her hands with affright.

Rudolf darted to the door—flung it open—and reaching the vestibule, unbarred the outer entrance and sprang out into the open plain. The moon was some two hours high, giving sufficient light to show him the dark forest through which he had been led in the early part of the evening. To this he now bent his steps; and though he knew himself to be many miles from his home; he hoped to reach it, provided he did not lose his way before the approach of the next day. However, he had not proceeded far when he heard a sound as if somebody was walking in his rear, and had just time to conceal himself behind a dwarf cedar, when two men appeared, conversing earnestly together.

"I tell you, Diogenes," remarked the taller, "that there is some strange fatality hanging over me, I fear that our midnight deed will yet——"

"No, no, master!" hastily interrupted the other, who was a black man, "I fear it not. The body was too well concealed beneath the waters of the bottomless lake. No eye saw us—no ear heard us but our own. We are secure."

"But," replied Guentín, the robber, "do the dead never arise—do they never betray?"

A solemn voice, which seemed to issue from the depths of the earth, sounded fearfully upon the ears of the two murderers—"they do!"

Appalled, they started and recoiled for a few moments—but gathering courage, Guentín cried, "It is but the echo of my own voice—let us onward. There is much to be done this night——"

"Aye?" cried Rudolf, springing from his concealment, "the world is to be rid of a villain!" and drawing a stiletto, which he usually carried at his side, the youth aimed a blow at the heart of the robber, which entered that of Diogenes, who had suddenly thrown himself between them. The man fell heavily to the ground—and Guentín, jerking a pistol from his belt, fired—and the ball whizzed past Rudolf's head. Before he could seize another, the robber fell beneath the well-aimed blow of Rudolf's keen weapon—and lay panting and struggling upon the greensward.

"Confess!" cried the young man, placing his

foot upon the robber's breast, "did you not murder the father of your wife, Irena, and cast him into the bottomless lake? Confess! for you have but a moment to live."

"I knew it—I knew it," gasped the dying man, "retribution has come at last—stranger—I confess it—I did murder him for the sake of his daughter—God forgive me!—I die."

They were his last words.

### III.

IRENA was still seated on the crimson covered sofa—in deep thought. Her husband had been with her the hour previous, and had gone again, as he said, on important business.

The clock on the mantel again chimed musically upon her ear and half started her from her reverie. It was the hour of two.

Suddenly, to the surprise of Irena, the lights in the apartment were extinguished—and in the midst of the darkness glowed the fiery finger, fearfully distinct. It was pointing upward—and as the eyes of the awe-struck lady were fastened upon it, a deep sepulchral voice uttered these words:

"Dwell in peace, my daughter. Thy father's death is avenged—he is happy. Dwell in peace."

The phantom finger dissolved into thin air—there was a dead silence—and as suddenly as

they had been extinguished, the lights were again made to burn as brightly as before.

While Irena yet remained bewildered by the suddenness and strangeness of this spiritual manifestation, the door gently swung upon its hinges, and Rudolf entered the apartment.

As her eyes fell upon him, she uttered a scream and turned deadly pale. Springing to her side, he spoke—

"Irena; Irena, listen to me! Happier days are in store for you—but oh! pardon me, pardon me, beautiful one—I have killed—your husband."

Without a word in reply, she shuddered violently, and sinking back, fainted entirely away. He took her gently in his arms and gradually kissed her back to consciousness; when, with a painful sigh, she burst into a passion of tears. He endeavored to soothe her.

"Calm thyself, dear one! Can you weep the death of a villain, the murderer of *your father*? You should rather rejoice that his death is avenged."

"You are right, Rudolf. I will weep no more."

As she became more tranquil, the glowing light of her soft eyes shone sweetly upon him, and as he drew her closer to him, his warm heart thrilling with happiness, he whispered very gently, "My own! my own!"

## THE ORPHANS FROM THE ALMS-HOUSE.

BY MRS. ANN S. STEPHENS.

[Entered, according to the Act of Congress, in the year 1854, by Edward Stephens, in the Clerk's office of the District-Court of the United States, for the Southern District of New York.]

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 112.

## CHAPTER V.

THE house at which Judge Sharp stopped was long, low, and terribly weather-beaten. Once it had been coated with red paint, but time had beaten this off in some places, and washed it together in others, till the color was now a dull brown, with patches of red here and there, visible beneath the eaves and around the windows. The highway separated this dwelling from the river, which took a bold, graceful curve just below the house; leaving a broad expanse of meadow land and some fine clumps of trees in full view on the opposite shore. Directly in front, ran a picket-fence, old, uneven and dilapidated, but in picturesque keeping with the building. The gate hung loosely on its hinges, just opposite a tumbling, old-fashioned porch, that shot over the front door, much after the fashion of that hideous thing called a poke, with which English women disfigure their pretty travelling bonnets and protect them from the sun. An immense trumpet-flower overrun this porch, whose antique mossiness was in fine keeping with it, for the straggling branches shot out in all directions, and its coarse blossoms, then in season, seemed to have drank up all the red paint as it vanished from the clapboards. Long, uncut grass, set thick with dandelions, filled the narrow strip between the front fence and the house, except just under the eaves, where it was worn away into a little, pebble-lined gutter, by the water-drops that poured from the roof every rainy day.

A few of those old-fashioned roses, broad and red, but almost single, so common about old houses beyond the reach of Dunlap, or Flag, struggled up through the grass, spreading their branches low down, and creeping along the lower portions of the fences, and on each side the porch. A garden, at one end of the house, was red with love-lies-bleeding and coxcombs, their deep hues contrasting with great clumps of marigolds and bachelor's-buttons, all claiming a pre-emption right over innumerable weeds and any

amount of ribbon grass, that struggled hard to drive them out.

With all its dilapidation, there was something picturesque and attractive about the old homestead—a mingling of rude taste and neglect, unthrifty, but suggestive of innate character. Mary Fuller looked around her, with that keen relish of gay colors and rude outline, that a rich uncultivated taste appreciates best. The glow of those warm-tinted, bold garden flowers seemed like a welcome; and the soft flow of the river, which she had so feared to lose, seemed like the voice of an old friend following her among strangers.

She had some little time for observation, for the gate opened with difficulty, groaning on its hinges, scraping its way in the segment of a circle upon the ground, and tearing up the grass by the roots in its progress. Evidently the front door was not in very frequent use, and the stubborn old gate seemed determined that it never should be again. A wren shot away from the porch, as the judge and his protegee entered it, and went fluttering in and out through the green branches waving over it, quite distractedly, as if she had never seen a human being there in her whole birdhood before.

"Poor little coward," said the judge, "it's afraid we shall drive its young ones from their old home."

Mary had followed the fugitive with sparkling eyes, and she now began peering among the leaves, quite expecting to find a nest full of darling little birdlings chirping for food. For aught she knew, poor alley-bred child, the birds built nests and filled them with eggs all the year round.

Judge Sharp rapped upon the door with his knuckles, for the old iron knocker groaned worse than the gate when he attempted to raise it. After a little, the door opened with a jerk; for, like the gate, it swung low, grating upon the threshold. In the entry stood a woman, tall beyond what is common in her sex, but slender and slightly stooping, not from feebleness, however,

but habit. The woman might have been handsome once, but there was little remnant of beauty left in that cold, grave face, threaded with wrinkles, and shaded by hair of a dull iron grey. Yet her eyes were keen, and intensely black; they must have had fire in them once; if so, it had burned itself out years before; for now they seemed clear and cold as her face.

"How do you do, aunt Hannah?" said the judge, reaching forth his hands, "I have brought the little girl, you see."

"What little girl?" inquired the woman, casting her cold eyes on Mary Fuller, "I know nothing about any little girl."

"Then uncle Nathan didn't get my letter," said the judge, a little anxiously.

"He hasn't had a letter these three years," was the concise reply.

"Well, I must see him then. Where is he, aunt Hannah?"

"In his old place."

"What, on the back porch?"

"Yes!"

"Well, aunt Hannah, just see to my little girl, while I go and speak with uncle Nathan," and the judge disappeared from the entry, through a side door.

"Come into the out room," said aunt Hannah to Mary, leading the way through an opposite door.

Mary followed in silence, chilled through and through by this iron coldness.

The room was chilly, and meagre of comforts like its mistress. A home-made carpet, striped in red and green, but greatly faded by time, covered the floor; a tall, mahogany bureau, with a back piece and top-drawers, stood on one side; a long, narrow dining-table, of black wood, with slender legs and claw-feet grasping each a small globe, stood between the two front windows. Over these windows were paper curtains of pale blue, rolled up with string and tassels of twisted cotton, just far enough to leave the lower panes visible. Half a dozen chairs, of dark brown wood touched with green, stood around the room; and over the dining-table hung an antique looking-glass, in a mahogany frame rendered black by time.

Mary sat down by an end window that overlooked the garden, and peered through the little panes to avoid the steady gaze that the woman fixed upon her. A sweet-briar bush grew against the window; but she caught bright glimpses of marigolds, and asparagus laden with red berries, through the fragrant leaves.

All at once she started and turned suddenly in her chair. The woman had spoken.

"Who are you?" was the curt question that had aroused her.

"I—I—ma'am?"

"Yes, I mean you. What's your name?"

"Mary Fuller, ma'am."

"What brought you in these parts?"

"I came with Isabel and Judge Sharp."

"What for?"

"To live with somebody, ma'am, I, I thought at first it was here!"

"Where did you come from?"

Mary blushed. Poor child! She had a vague idea that there was something to be ashamed of in coming from the Alms-House. As she hesitated the woman repeated her question, but more briefly, only saying,

"Where?"

"From the Alms-House!"

Aunt Hannah's eyes fell. A faint color crept through the wrinkles on her forehead, and for a few moments she ceased to interrogate the child. But she spoke at length, in the same impassive voice as before,

"Have you a father?"

"No, ma'am."

"A mother?"

"I, I don't know."

"Who is Isabel?"

"A little girl that was with me in——" She was about to say in the Alms-House; but more sensitive regarding Isabel than herself, she changed the term and said, "that was with me in the carriage."

"The carriage," repeated aunt Hannah, moving toward a window and lifting the paper blind, "did it take four horses to drag you and another little girl over the mountains?"

"Oh! no, ma'am, there was a lady."

"A lady! who?"

"A lady who lives down the river, in a great square house, with a sort of short steeple on the roof."

"What, Mrs. Farnham?" said the woman, dropping the blind as if it had been a roll of fire, while her face turned white to the lips, and a glow came into her eyes, that made Mary's heart beat quick, for there was something startling in it, as the woman stood searching her face for the answer.

"Yes, that is the name, ma'am."

Aunt Hannah's lips grew colder and whiter, while the glow concentrated in her eyes like a ray of fire.

"Is she coming here to live?" broke in low, gasping tones, from those cold lips.

"I heard her say that she was!" replied the little girl, gently, warmed by a touch of sympathy;

for even this stern betrayal of feeling was less repulsive than the chill apathy of her previous manner.

"And this Isabel. Is the girl here?"

"No, not hers, she is like me—no, not like me—only in having no father and mother—for Isabel is—oh! how beautiful."

"And what is she doing here?" questioned the woman, still in her stern, low tones.

"Mrs. Farnham has adopted her," answered the child, "and no wonder; anybody would like to have Isabel for a child."

"Why?"

"Because she is so lovely."

"Why didn't she adopt you?" said the woman, without a change in her husky voice.

"Me, ma'am! Oh, how could she?"

The child, as she spoke, spread her little hands abroad, and looked downward as was her touching habit, when her deformity was brought in question.

The woman stood in the centre of the room, pale, and still gazing upon that singular little face, with a degree of intensity of which its former coldness seemed incapable. At last she strode up to the window, and putting her hand on Mary's forehead, bent back her head, while she perused her face.

"And who will adopt you?" she said, at length, as if communing with herself.

"I don't know," said the child, tremblingly, "when I came here I thought perhaps this house was the one that Mr. Sharp expected me to live in."

The woman continued her gaze during some seconds, then her hand dropped away from the throbbing little forehead, and she returned to her seat.

That moment the door opened, and Enoch Sharp looked through, with a smile that penetrated into the room like a sunbeam.

"Come, aunt Hannah," he said, "we can do nothing without you."

## CHAPTER VI.

AUNT HANNAH arose, and walked with a precise and firm step from the room. Enoch Sharp led the way into a low back porch, that overlooked that portion of the garden devoted to vegetables. In one end of this porch stood a huge cheese-press; and on the dresser opposite, a huge wooden churn was turned bottom up, with the dasher leaning against it. Several milking-pails of wood, scoured to a spotless whiteness, were ranged on each side, while nicely kept strainers hung over them. There was a faint,

pure smell of the dairy near, as if the porch opened to a butter and cheese room; but the exquisite cleanliness of everything around made this rather agreeable than otherwise.

The principal object in the porch, however, was an old man seated in a huge armed-chair of unpainted oak, with a splint bottom worn smooth and bright by constant use. This chair stood near the back entrance, and the old man seemed quite too large and unwieldy for any attempt at exercise; but his large, rosy face was turned toward the door, as he heard Enoch Sharp and his sister coming through the kitchen; and one of the frankest smiles, you ever beheld, beamed from his soft brown eyes over the broad and benevolent expanse of his face.

"Well, Nathan, what do you want of me?" inquired the austere lady, in her usual cold tones.

The good man seemed taken aback by this short address. He looked at the judge as if for help, saying,

"Hasn't he told you, Hannah?"

"Yes, he wants us to keep this little thing in yonder, and let him pay us for it. I don't sell kindness—do you, Nathan?"

"No, no, certainly not; but then, Hannah, you must reflect; the judge's own house is not exactly suited for a person like this little girl; and if we don't take her, who will?"

The woman stood musing, her cold face unchanged, her eyes cast thoughtfully downward.

"You see, sister," persisted uncle Nathan, "this little girl isn't, as the judge says, a sort of person to make a pet of, like the one Mrs. Farnham has adopted."

Aunt Hannah started, and looked up with one of those sharp glances, that we have once seen disturb the cold monotony of her face. There was something in the name of Mrs. Farnham, that seemed to sting her into life.

"She isn't handsome, you know," persisted the good man, "but you won't care for that, Hannah. The judge says she's a bright, good little creature, and she'll be company for us, don't you think so?"

Aunt Hannah looked at the judge, who stood regarding her with some degree of anxiety.

"Judge," she said, "that woman yonder? She is rich, and these two children loved each other—why did she send this girl to me?"

"She did not, I brought her without her knowledge," said the judge.

"But why were they put asunder?"

"Mrs. Farnham seems to have taken a dislike to poor Mary," was the reply. "The other child is very pretty, and this was a great recommendation, for a lady like her, you know."

The quick fire once more came to aunt Hannah's eyes. She drew herself up, and looking sternly at Enook Sharp, said, with a degree of feeling very unusual to her,

"Judge Sharp, you can go home. I will take the girl and bring her up after my own fashion; but as for your money we are not poor enough—my brother and I—to sell kindness."

The judge would have spoken, but aunt Hannah waved her hand, after her usual cold, stately fashion, saying, "take the girl—or leave her with me."

"But she will be a burden upon you!" he began to say.

Aunt Hannah did not answer, but going into "the out room," removed Mary's bonnet and mantilla, then taking her by one hand she led her into the porch directly before uncle Nathan.

"Talk with her," she said, "I have the chores to do up yet."

"Yes, yes, talk with uncle Nathan, Mary: you will feel at home at once," cried the judge, somewhat annoyed that all his benevolent plans could not be carried out, but glad nevertheless that his poor favorite had found a home.

There are faces in the world which a warm-hearted person cannot look upon without a glow of generous emotion. Those faces are seldom among the most beautiful. Certainly, I have never found them so; but this power of waking up all the sweet emotions of an irrepressible nature is worth all the beauty on earth. Uncle Nathan Heap's face was of this character. Full and ruddy, it beamed with an expression so benevolent, so warm and true, that you were ready to love and trust him at the first glance.

Mary Fuller had too much character in herself not to feel all that was noble in that face. Her eye lighted up, the color came in a faint hue to her cheeks, and without a word, she placed her little hands between the plump brown palms that were extended to receive her.

Uncle Nathan drew her close up to his knees, pressing her little hands kindly between his, and perusing her face with his friendly brown eyes.

"There, that will do, you are a nice little girl," he said, "I'm glad the judge thought of bringing you here."

Mary was ready to cry. This reception was so cheering, after the cold interrogations of aunt Hannah.

"Go, bring that milking-stool, yonder, and sit down here while I talk with you a little," said uncle Nathan, pointing toward three or four stools, that hung on the picket fence in the back garden.

Mary ran across the cabbage patch, and

brought the milking-stool, which she placed near the old man.

"Close up, close up," he said, patting his fat knee, as if he expected her to lean against it. "There, now, this will do. Sit still and see how you like the garden as the sunshine strikes it."

Mary looked around full of serious curiosity. The sunshine was striking across the cabbage patch, which she had just crossed, tinging the great heads with gold. The massive effect of this blended green and gold; the deep green of the outer leaves, lined and crimped into a curious network; the inner leaves folded so hard and crisp, in their lighter hues; all struck the child as singularly beautiful. Then the dun red of the beet leaves, that took up the slanting sunbeams as they strayed over the garden, scattering gold everywhere; and the delicate and feathery green of the parsnip beds: these also had a charm for her young eyes, a charm that one must feel for the first time to appreciate.

"Don't you think it a pleasant place out here?" said uncle Nathan, looking blandly down upon her.

"Oh! yes, very, very nice. I never saw so many things growing at once before?"

"No! Don't they have gardens in New York there?"

"Some persons do, but not with these things in them: but they have beautiful roses and honeysuckles, and sights of flowers: don't you like flowers, sir?"

"Like flowers? Why, yes. Didn't you see the coxcombs and marigolds in the front garden?"

"Yes," said Mary, a little disappointed; for, to say the truth, she found more beauty in the nicely arranged vegetable beds, with their rich variety of tints, just then bathed in the sunset; besides a taste for rare flowers had been excited, by many a childish visit to those pretty angles and grass plats, bright with choice flowers, that brighten many of our up-town dwellings in New York. "Yes, they are large and grand, but I like little tiny flowers, with stems that shake when you only touch them."

"Oh, you'll find lots of flowers like that in the spring time, I can tell you. Among the rocks and trees up there, the ground is thick with them."

"And can I pick them?" asked the child, lifting her brightening eyes on uncle Nathan, with a world of confiding earnestness in them, but still doubtful if she would dare to touch even a wild blossom without permission.

"Pick them!" repeated the old man, laughing till his double chin trembled like a jelly.

"Why the cattle tramp over thousands of them

every day. You may pick aprons full, if you have a mind to."

"I shouldn't like much to pick them in that way," said the child, thoughtfully.

"Why not, ha?"

"I don't know, sir."

"Call me uncle Nathan!"

"Well, I don't know, uncle Nathan," repeated the child blushing, "but it seems to me as if it must hurt the pretty flowers to be picked, as if they had feeling like us, and would cry out in my fingers."

"That is a queer thought," said uncle Nathan, and he looked curiously on the child.

"Is it? I don't know," was the modest reply, "but I always feel that way about flowers."

"She is a strange little creature," thought uncle Nathan, who had a world of sympathy for every generous emotion the human soul ever knew, "what company she will be here in the old stoop, nights like this."

Then, in a quiet, gentle way, uncle Nathan began to question the child, as his sister had done: but Mary did not shrink from him as she had from his relative; and the sunset gathered round them, while she was telling her mournful little history.

The old man's eyes filled with tears more than once, as he listened. Mary saw it, and drew close to him as she spoke, till her little clasped hands rested on his knees.

Just then, aunt Hannah came into the porch, with a pail in her hand foaming over with milk.

"Oh!" exclaimed uncle Nathan, lifting himself from the arm-chair with a heavy sigh, "I oughtn't to have been left here, in this way, while you are doing up the chores, Hannah. Give me the stool, little darter, I must do my share of the milking, any how."

"Sit still! The child's strange yet; I can do up the chores for once, I suppose," answered aunt Hannah, placing a bright tin pan on the dresser, and tightening a snow-white strainer over the pail. "Sit down, I say."

Uncle Nathan dropped into his capacious chair, with a relieving sigh, though half the authority in aunt Hannah's command was lost in the flow of a pearly torrent of milk which soon filled the pan.

"Can't I help?" inquired Mary, going up to aunt Hannah, as she lifted the brimming pan with both hands, and bore it toward a swinging shelf in the pantry.

"Not now; when you are rested. Go back to Nathan," answered aunt Hannah, looking sideways over the uplifted milk pan.

Mary drew back to her place by the old man's

knee. And they watched the sun as it set redly behind the hills, covering the garden and all the hills with its dusky gold.

"See!" said uncle Nathan, pointing to an immense sunflower crowning a stalk at least eight feet high. "See how that great flower wheels round as the sun travels toward the mountains; and stands with its face to the west, when it goes down. Did you ever see that before?"

"The great, brown flower, fringed with yellow leaves—does it really do that?" cried Mary, with her bright eyes wandering from the stately flower to uncle Nathan's face. "Oh! how I should love to sit and watch it all day!"

"I do sometimes, Sundays, when its too warm for anything else," said uncle Nathan, "but supposing you go to bed early, and get up in the morning, sure as you do, that sunflower will be found looking straight to the east."

Aunt Hannah, who had bustled about the porch and pantry sometime, appeared, after a short interval, from the kitchen. Uncle Nathan understood the signal, and taking Mary by the hand, led her into a kitoken, neatly covered with a rag carpet, and furnished with old-fashioned wooden chairs. A little round tea-table stood in the middle of the room, covered with warm tea-bisouit, preserved plumbs in china saucers, and plates of molasses-pound-cake, with a plate of golden butter, and one of cheese, set at equal distances.

Aunt Hannah, took her seat behind an oblong tray of dark japanned tin, on which stood a conical little pewter tea-pot, bright as silver, and a pile of tea-spoons small enough for a modern play-house, but so bright that they scattered cheerful gleams over the whole tray. Three chairs stood around the table, and in one of these Mary placed herself, obedient to a move of aunt Hannah's hand. A bowl of bread and milk stood by her plate, to which she betook herself with hearty relish, while aunt Hannah performed the honors of her pewter tea-pot, mingling a judicious quantity of water with Mary's portion of her favorite beverage, while uncle Nathan roached over and sweetened it with prodigality, observing that "it was the nature of children to love sweets," at which aunt Hannah gave a cold smile of assent.

After tea, uncle Nathan withdrew to his seat on the porch again. Mary would have made herself useful about the tea-things, but aunt Hannah dismissed her with an observation that she might rest herself in the porch.

It was very pleasant to keep close up to the side of that old man, and find protection, from

loneliness, in the shadow of his great chair. Still, a sadness crept over her poor heart, for with all her simple-hearted courage, the place was strange, and in spite of the cordial voice of uncle Nathan that came cheerily through the gathering darkness, she felt a moisture creeping into her eyes. The very stillness and beautiful quiet of everything around had elements of sadness in it to a creature so sensitively organized as she was. She thought of her father, and fixing her meek eyes on the stars, as they came one by one into the sky, began to wonder if he knew where she was, and how much like a father that good old man was acting toward his little girl. Then she thought of Isabel; and of Judge Sharp; of the great, good fortune that had befallen her in being so near them both; and her poor little heart swelled with a world of grateful feelings. I do think the sweetest tears ever shed by mortal, come from those grateful feelings, which, too exquisite for words, and too powerful for silence, can find no language to express themselves in but tears.

Mary Fuller began to sob. She had for the moment forgotten the old man's presence.

"What is this?" cried uncle Nathan, laying one hand over her head, and patting her cheeks with his broad palm, "home-sick a'ready."

"No, no," sobbed Mary, "I, I was only thinking how good you all are to me, how very, very happy I ought to feel?"

"And can't. Is that it?"

"I don't know," answered the child, wiping her eyes, and looking up, searching for uncle Nathan's face in the star-light. "There is something here that isn't happy entirely, or a bit like sorrow, but sometimes it almost chokes me, and would quite if I couldn't cry it off."

"I used to feel that way once, I remember," said uncle Nathan, thoughtfully, "but it wore off as I grew older."

"I shouldn't quite like to have it wear off

entirely," said the child, fixing her eyes on the stars, and clinging to the golden dreams that so often haunted her, just before this fit of weeping came on, "altogether, I don't think one would like to part with one's thoughts, you know."

"Not even when they make you cry?"

"No, I think not—those are the thoughts that one loves to remember best."

"Come, Nathan," said aunt Hannah, coming into the porch with a tallow candle in her hand, "it's almost bed time."

Uncle Nathan arose and entered the kitchen. Seating himself at the little round stand, he opened a huge, old Bible, that lay upon it, and putting on a pair of iron spectacles began to read.

Mary, seated by aunt Hannah, listened with gentle interest; her little hands folded in her lap, and her large grey eyes dwelling earnestly on the face of the white-haired reader.

When the chapter was done, they all knelt down, and uncle Nathan poured forth the fullness of his faith in a prayer, that went over the child's heart like the summer wind upon a water-lily, stirring all its young thoughts to their gentle depths, as the fragrant leaves of the lily give forth their sweetness. Two or three times she heard aunt Hannah murmur some words uneasily, as if some uneasy thought, at variance with her brother's prayer, disturbed her. But directly the child was enwrapped, heart and soul, in the earnest words that fell from the old man's lips, and when she stood up again, her face had a sort of glory in its expression. It was the first night in a long, long time that Mary had been so near heaven.

And this was the kind of home which Enoch Sharp had given to the orphan. Did she sleep well? If holy thoughts can summon angels, many bright spirits hovered over her little bed that night.

But aunt Hannah never closed her eyes.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

## "UNCLE MAURICE."

FROM THE FRENCH OF EMILE SOUVESTRE.

It is with men's lives as with days: some dawn radiant with a thousand colors, others dark with gloomy clouds. That of my uncle Maurice was one of the latter. He was so sickly when he came into the world, that they thought he must die; but notwithstanding these anticipations, which might be called hopes, he continued to live, suffering and deformed.

He was deprived of all the joys as well as of all the attractions of childhood. He was oppressed because he was weak, and laughed at for his deformity. In vain the little hunchback opened his arms to the world; the world scoffed at him, and went its way.

However, he still had his mother, and it was to her that the child directed all the feelings of a heart repulsed by others. With her he found shelter, and was happy, till he reached the age when a man must take his place in life; and Maurice had to content himself with that which others had refused with contempt. His education would have qualified him for any course of life; and he became a clerk in one of the little toll-houses at the entrance of his native town.

He was always shut up in this dwelling of a few feet square, with no relaxation from the office accounts but reading, and his mother's visits. On fine summer days she came to work at the door of his hut, under the shade of a clematis planted by Maurice. And even then when she was silent, her presence was a pleasant change to the hunchback; he heard the clinking of her long knitting-kneedles, he saw her mild and mournful profile, which reminded him of so many courageously-borne trials; he could every now and then rest his hand affectionately on that bowed down neck, and exchange a smile with her!

This comfort was soon to be taken from him. His old mother fell sick, and at the end of a few days he had to give up all hope. Maurice was overcome at the idea of a separation which would henceforth leave him alone on earth, and abandoned himself to boundless grief. He knelt by the bed-side of the dying woman, he called her by the fondest names, he pressed her in his arms, as if he could so keep her in life. His mother tried to return his caresses, and to answer him; but her hands were cold, her voice already

gone. She could only press her lips against the forehead of her son, heave a sigh, and close her eyes forever!

They tried to take Maurice away, but he resisted them and threw himself on that now motionless form.

"Dead!" cried he; "dead! She who had never left me, she who was the only one in the world who loved me! You, my mother, dead! What then remains for me here below?"

A stifled voice replied—

"God!"

Maurice, startled, raised himself up! Was it a last sigh from the dead, or his own conscience that had answered him? He did not seek to know, but he understood the answer, and accepted it.

It was then that I first knew him. I often went to see him in his little toll-house; he mixed in my childish games, told me his finest stories, and let me gather his flowers. Deprived as he was of all external attractiveness, he showed himself full of kindness to all who came to him, and, though he never would put himself forward, he had a welcome for every one. Deserted, and despised, he submitted to everything with a gentle patience; but those who otherwise might have promoted him as his services deserved, were repulsed by his deformity. As he had no patrons he found his claims were always disregarded. They preferred before him those who were better able to make themselves agreeable, and seemed to be granting him a favor when letting him keep the humble office which enabled him to live. Uncle Maurice bore injustice as he had borne contempt; unfairly treated by men, he raised his eyes higher, and trusted in the justice of Him who cannot be deceived.

He lived in an old house in the suburb, where many work people, as poor but not as forlorn as he, also lodged. Among these neighbors there was a single woman, who lived by herself in a little garret, into which came both wind and rain. She was a young girl, pale, silent, and with nothing to recommend her but her wretchedness, and her resignation to it. She was never seen speaking to any other woman, and no song cheered her garret. She worked without interest and without relaxation; a depressing gloom

seemed to envelop her like a shroud. Her dejection affected Maurice; he attempted to speak to her: she replied mildly but in few words. It was easy to see that she preferred her silence and her solitude to the little hunchback's good will; he perceived it, and said no more.

But Toinette's needle was hardly sufficient for her support, and presently work failed her! Maurice learned that the poor girl was in want of everything, and that the tradesmen refused to give her credit. He immediately went to them, and privately engaged to pay them for what they supplied Toinette with.

Things went on in this way for several months. The young dressmaker continued out of work, until she was at last frightened at the bills she had contracted with the shopkeepers. When she came to an explanation with them, everything was discovered. Her first impulse was to run to uncle Maurice, and thank him on her knees. Her habitual reserve had given way to a burst of deepest feeling. It seemed as if gratitude had melted all the ice of that numbed heart.

Being now no longer embarrassed with a secret, the little hunchback could give greater efficacy to his good offices. Toinette became to him a sister, for whose wants he had a right to provide. It was the first time since the death of his mother that he had been able to share his life with another. The young woman received his attentions with feeling—but with reserve. All Maurice's efforts were insufficient to dispel her gloom: she seemed touched by his kindness, and sometimes expressed her sense of it with warmth; but there she stopped. Her heart was a closed book, which the little hunchback might bend over, but could not read. In truth he cared little to do so: he gave himself up to the happiness of being no longer alone, and took Toinette such as her long trials had made her: he loved her as she was, and wished for nothing else but still to enjoy her company.

This thought insensibly took possession of his

mind, to the exclusion of all besides. The poor girl was as forlorn as himself; she had become accustomed to the deformity of the hunchback, and she seemed to look on him with an affectionate sympathy! What more could he wish for? Until then, the hopes of making himself acceptable to a helpmate had been repelled by Maurice as a dream; but chance seemed willing to make it a reality. After much hesitation he took courage, and decided to speak to her.

It was evening; the little hunchback, in much agitation, directed his steps toward the workwoman's garret. Just as he was about to enter, he thought he heard a strange voice pronouncing the maiden's name. He quickly pushed open the door, and perceived Toinette weeping, and leaning on the shoulder of a young man in the dress of a sailor.

At the sight of my uncle, she disengaged herself quickly, and ran to him, crying out—

"Ah! come in—come in! It is he that I thought was dead: it is Julien; it is my betrothed!"

Maurice tottered, and drew back. A single word had told him all!

It seemed to him as if the ground shook and his heart was going to break; but the same voice that he had heard by his mother's death-bed again sounded in his ears, and he soon recovered himself. God was still his friend!

He himself accompanied the newly-married pair on the road when they went away, and, after having wished them all the happiness which was denied to him, he returned with resignation to the old house in the suburb.

It was there that he ended his life, forsaken by men, but not, as he said, by the *Father which is in heaven*. He felt His presence everywhere; it was to him in the place of all else. When he died, it was with a smile, and like an exile setting out for his own country. He who had consoled him in poverty and ill health, when he was suffering from injustice and forsaken by all, had made death a gain and blessing to him.

## THE SILENT COURTSHIP.

BY ELLA RODMAN.

UNCLE OLIVER and aunt Penelope, a strange couple they were! How much like two unruly oxen, yoked together against their wills, and each pulling different ways! They were never seen arm-in-arm: when they walked together, they straggled; when they rode together, there was room enough between them for a third person; when they ate together, they were divided by the length of the table. Aunt Penelope seemed to live in an unforgiving frame of mind toward uncle Oliver for having asked her to marry him; and uncle Oliver experienced the same feelings toward her for having accepted him. My aunt Penelope was one of the greatest talkers that ever lived, and yet the report was that uncle Oliver had proposed to her on account of her silence. After that, I could not rest until I had fathomed the whole mystery; and in the family record it was written:

Penelope Leskitt had arrived at the age of thirty-five years without having met with any individual who had tempted her to resign the liberty of single-blessedness. So she ruled the family mansion, and silenced all contradictions with a flow of language that was perfectly unequalled, and went to "meeting" and attended the sewing societies, without dreaming of any thing better, until one winter some restless spirit raised an excitement in New Damascus that quite roused the sleepy inhabitants.

This, however, was only the storm before the calm; for soon every one was quiet who wished to prove a worthy member of "the silent society." Some wag, in an unknown and mysterious manner, had been a quiet instigator of the whole affair, and offered the reward of a gold thimble to the lady who should attend all the society meetings without speaking a word. Gentlemen were admitted upon these occasions, and the ladies were expected to employ themselves upon sewing.

The village of New Damascus for once seemed alive. "L'Academie Silencieuse" was brought up again and again—the sentiments of Zimmerman were quoted, and every one was expected to be familiar with his wife's dying speech: "My poor Zimmerman! Who will now understand thee?" As though it were possible to understand a man who said nothing!

Foremost among the competitors for the gold thimble was Penelope Leskitt, the greatest talker in the place; and a great many ungenerous stratagems were practised to throw her off her guard, but thus far without success. No pillar of salt could be more immovable than Penelope; she seemed fairly frozen into silence.

An old bachelor, named Oliver Cramp, who possessed but few endearing qualities, always attended these meetings with a kind of sardonic satisfaction. They exactly realized the mission he would assign to woman; for in *his* opinion she should

"Learn to labor and be still."

Oliver was no favorite with either party; and it entered into the heads of his so-called friends that it would be a praiseworthy thing to give him a serious fright, and tempt Penelope Leskitt beyond the pale of self-control. He had no objection to tormenting Penelope, but when given to understand that he was expected to make a real bona fide offer he strenuously objected.

"Don't be frightened, man," said one of the conspirators, "poor Miss Penelope will be exactly like a bandaged cat who sees a fine mouse before her that she is anxious to capture, but finds herself perfectly powerless."

Oliver still shook his head—if the cat *should* get loose, what would become of the mouse? But they were determined to accomplish their project; and finally, with much urging and pushing, Oliver faced the enemy.

Miss Penelope was, fortunately, partial to solitary corners; it looked dignified to disdain companionship, and besides, it is easier to keep quiet when alone by oneself. Did she not experience a thrill—a sort of prophetic feeling as the music of her first offer was about to fall upon her ear?

As to this, deponent saith not; but she certainly *did* experience a twitch in the skirt of her dress, that caused her to turn suddenly and meet the somewhat anxious face of Oliver Cramp.

"Miss Immacole!" began the trembling bachelor; but the immaculate spinster pursued her stitching, and was as though she heard him not.

"I really wish to speak to you," continued Oliver, "I have been wanting to say something to you for a long time."

"What can it be?" thought Miss Penelope, but she placed her fingers on her lips, and made various indications expressive of a determination to say nothing.

"Miss Penelope," said Oliver, at length, as his courage increased, "just tell me 'yes' or 'no,' whether you will have me—no one will hear you—and I can't control my feelings any longer."

The muscles around the lady's mouth twitched convulsively, and she bent upon Oliver a look meant to express both sorrow and encouragement, but which reminded him so forcibly of the bandaged cat in her frantic grief at losing the prey within her reach, that he wished himself safely out of the scrape. But Penelope remained firm; not a word could he extract from her; and Oliver departed without noticing various masonic gestures that were meant to express, "to be continued."

Sit and triumph, Penelope Leskitt! for thou

hast grappled with the enemy and conquered—but not to the loss of any earthly good; no, indeed! Miss Penelope would not lose the gold thimble, nor would she lose Oliver—so she split the difference. There had been no edict against *writing*—so, seizing a blank leaf and a convenient pencil, she expressed thereon her perfect willingness to take Oliver Cramp "for better or for worse, and be unto him a faithful, loving wife until death do us part."

Oliver's dismay was only equalled by the merit of his sympathizing *friends*; and when they urged the propriety of sending a reply, he railed at the whole coterie, and sullenly retired to his own domicile. That tender epistle was to him a sentence of banishment; in an incredibly short time he was on his way to California, and Miss Penelope was left to wear the willow.

Thus suddenly defeated at the very opening of so brilliant a campaign, the deserted one sat not like Patience on a monument, but Napoleon-like, braced herself up firmly with misfortune, and turned her attention elsewhere. She was now resolved to win the gold thimble at all hazards; and alas! for the womenkind of New Damascus, she was soon undisputed mistress of the field.

Marvels never come singly; and the next wonder that startled the people of New Damascus was the sudden return of Oliver Cramp, who found that "travelling didn't agree with him no how."

He redeemed his broken faith, and then settled down into a state of hopeless sullenness. So Penelope Leskitt was married; and her sister Maria reigned in her stead.

## THE PROMISED KISS.

BY A. L. OTIS.

IVINGTON AMORY, a young artist in search of the beautiful, found himself one warm afternoon, in July, on Higbee's beach, which is about an hour's ride from the fashionable bathing-place at Cape May, and is famous for its brilliant pebbles of all colors, particularly for one, which is called the Cape May diamond.

As he reclined lazily on the sand enjoying the breeze from the bay, and the sailing of the fish-hawks, his thoughts were interrupted by the eager tone of some children's voices who alighted from a Jersey wagon, and commenced an active search for diamonds. Among them he perceived a little girl, whom he knew, and who always attracted the artist's eye by her grace, whether on the green, or at the hops, or in the rough waves playing like a baby mermaid. Her name was Leonora Revillo. She was a lithe little maiden of nine years, with gloriously large, dark eyes, and pretty, rosy lips.

The children passed Amory without observing him, so eager were they in their search, and they were soon out of sight; but hardly an hour elapsed, before he again heard their exulting little voices, as they approached, after having met with signal good fortunes. Gaining for the first time, some idea of the value of the spoil, he glanced carelessly among the pebbles at his feet, and saw almost immediately, one of the largest diamonds ever found there. Upon examination it proved to be perfectly free from flaws, and of a delicate pinkish tinge, that, combined with its pretty, egg-like shape, made it really beautiful. While he was still admiring it, he heard one of the children say,

"Father will call you. Dull Eyes, to-day, Leonora, and me Bright Eyes, for I have found three, and you not one."

"And I seven," "and I five," "and I four," cried numerous voices.

"Oh, Leonora, for shame! You never find the pretty things. You are always looking after fish-hawks, or sand-pups, or sails, and haven't found one diamond, for the ring father promised you."

Leonora's face expressed shame, and vexation, sufficient for a disappointed California gold hunter. She began eagerly looking round her, a very pretty picture of impatience, and disappointed ambition.

Amory called the children to him and showed them his diamond, asking to whom he should give it, supposing the children would, with one voice, suggest the unfortunate Leonora. On the contrary there were shrill cries of "me," "give it to me." "No, no, to me!" Leonora being older, and somewhat more bashful than the other children, restrained her impatience to become owner of the stone, and only once faintly said,

"I should like it."

"Would you like to have it?" he asked.

"Oh, yes, very much, indeed."

"Well, will you give me a kiss for it?"

"Oh, yes, a great many of them."

"Stop," said he, gravely, "I only ask for one, but you promise me that."

"Yes," and she held out her hand for the stone, her eyes dancing with joy.

"And will you pay me when I demand payment?"

"I will pay you now."

"No, no, thank you, I had rather have the pleasure of anticipation. Will you not promise to pay me that kiss, when I shall demand it, upon condition of receiving this stone now?"

"Oh, yes, I promise," and though those cherry lips, pouting with the long suspense, looked sufficiently tempting, Amory gave her the diamond, without taking its price, and saw her run off in triumph, surrounded by her companions.

The romantic idea which suggested this bargain served as food for Amory's imagination, till he had painted a little sketch called "The Promised Kiss," representing a youth of about his own years, eighteen, kneeling to receive a touch on the forehead, from a rather Madonna-like figure, having preposterously large eyes, who bent gracefully over him. After this picture, which he soon learned to think unbearable, was destroyed, all remembrance of the promised kiss faded from his mind, till it was recalled many years afterward.

The interim was spent by him in Europe, where the young experimenter in colors, became a handsome man, of whose artistic skill fame began to whisper wonderful stories.

Leonora Revillo grew only more perfectly lovely as woman's charms were added to her childish beauty, and she was the belle at Newport the

happy summer that saw her nineteenth birthday.

One evening, as she was listlessly submitting her luxuriant, dark curls to the skill of the delighted hairdresser, her friend Martha Wyndham came dancing into the room, and whispered, "Set your cap to-night, and set it becomingly, for there is a new arrival among the beaux, a very handsome millionaire! He is to be at the ball to-night."

"Who is he?" asked Leonora.

"A Mr. Somerton from the South, I believe. I do like Southerners!"

"You had better set your cap then."

"Oh, I shall, assuredly. Don't you see this love of a peach-blossom dress? Is it not becoming? What are you going to wear? This pure white—this cloud of a dress? It is charming! and the work on it looks like strings and clusters of pearls. But only those snow-berries in your hair—common things—do wear your silver ornaments."

But the snow-berries matched the dress, and Leonora looked like a very innocent Venus, clothed in mist, with froth-heads still clinging to her, as, with her soft, dark eyes full of pleasure, her lips that were usually prone to repose, breaking into a smile, and her motion the very expression of a dreamy joy, she took her place in the dance.

She was introduced to Mr. Somerton, and danced the second set with him, well pleased to find the new arrival a very agreeable man, besides being a very handsome one, with earnest blue eyes, and a golden moustache.

A few dances together at balls, some strolls (though in a crowd) by moonlight, some rides on horseback, and several rainy days spent indoors together, made the acquaintance speed rapidly. Indeed, Leonora knew that Mr. Somerton loved her, though she had given no name to the bliss, which in her own heart made its new found home.

Several ladies and gentlemen received an invitation, one afternoon, from a resident of the place, to come to his house and decide upon the merits of a picture which had just arrived from Europe, painted by an American artist—Mr. Livingston Amory. Leonora and Mr. Somerton were among the invited. Standing with many others before the picture, they gazed at it in silence till Leonora turned away with tears streaming from her eyes. It represented Cleopatra parting from Anthony. Among all the admiring remarks made upon the picture, there was but one that would have satisfied an artist. When Somerton asked in a low tone why the picture so distressed her, she replied,

"I forgot it was a picture."

"Is Cleopatra so great a favorite with you, that you weep over her sorrows?"

"Cleopatra's grief is so expressed in that painting, that I cannot help feeling with her. Why did I never pity her before?"

On the way home, Leonora, and Mr. Somerton wandered in the summer twilight, quite out of the town, and in a pleasant green lane, up which the glowing evening star shone, the vows they exchanged were heard by none but themselves.

That evening after tea, the merits of the picture were still further discussed, and some remarks made concerning the speedy return of the artist to his native land. Leonora had entirely forgotten the kiss she had once promised this artist, though she still wore as a seal the stone he had given her. It was in its original state, except that at the large end it was polished just sufficiently to receive her initials in a pretty lozenge. A band of gold around it and three small gold chains attaching it to her watch-guard, made it one of the very prettiest of those little toys ladies call their "charms."

About a week after the visit to the picture, a rumor was circulated through the ball-room, that Mr. Amory would arrive, or had arrived, in Newport that very evening. While Leonora was leaning on the arm of Mr. Somerton, she expressed a strong wish to see the artist who had known how to awake with such power the deepest feelings of the heart. Mr. Somerton was silent, so silent that Leonora stole a glance at his face, and blushed as she imagined she read jealousy there. It was flattering to her, perhaps, but unworthy of her lover. She wished heartily for the immediate presence of the artist, that she might show Mr. Somerton how little he had to fear. At this instant a waiter handed her a note.

Astonished at its arrival at such a time, she drew her lover to a window recess, near which lights were placed, and entirely unconscious of his closely watchful eyes, she proceeded to open and read the following note:

"Do you remember receiving from a young artist a stone, worthless in itself, but to him a 'pearl of great price?' He has not forgotten the promise you made on receiving it, nor can he forego the fulfilment of that promise."

"For more than an hour, had he gazed with ever increasing admiration on your peerless beauty, ere he recognized in you the very lovely child who once captivated his boyish fancy. This recognition was aided by learning your name, and observing that you wore a pearl-like pebble, which, notwithstanding its beautiful setting, he

knew to be the one of so great import to him. As you doubtless remember the bargain, and cannot wish to avoid paying so just a debt, he will find some opportunity this evening of receiving his due."

Indignant amazement flushed Leonora's brow, and turning to Mr. Somerton, she would have hastily handed the note to him, had she not been struck with the keenness of his glance. It looked like distrust, and she despised the feeling. Haughtily withdrawing her half extended hand, containing the note, she requested her lover to lead her from the room, and left him at the foot of the staircase without a word.

In her own room she reflected upon her present position. The promise was vividly revealed to her mind, and honesty demanded just payment of the debt she had incurred. Nevertheless it could not be done—it was an impossibility. Besides, should she even overcome her own reluctance, ought she not to tell Mr. Somerton all about it, and would not this occasion a quarrel? She determined to find some mode of eluding the penalty, and finally wrote the following note, sending it to Mr. Amory with the pebble, by the waiter who had brought his to her.

"I return the stone which I find too costly, for me to purchase. The price you asked was a trifle at the time. Was it generous to demand it now when circumstances make it no longer so?"

In ten minutes an answer was returned, accompanied by the stone.

"Return me what was mine, precisely as it was when you received it, or I claim the payment of your debt, and should you refuse to see me this evening, one half hour from now in the arbor; I will remind you of your promise, when perhaps its fulfilment may not be so agreeable as I should now try to make it."

"Despicable creature," cried Leonora, despairingly—then, with sudden resolve, throwing around her a white crape shawl, she hastened to the ball-room, and found her lover awaiting her at the door. He glanced uneasily at her pale cheek, and whispered,

"You are not well. Let us go to the garden. You will feel better for resting in the arbor, after the close air of this room."

"Yes, come. I have something to tell you. But no—let us walk on the piazza, I can tell you the best there."

Bending, that he might catch every word, he heard from Leonora the whole story, and then promised the blushing, trembling girl that if she chose he would be present, yet not interfere with

the accomplishment of what her conscience represented as a duty.

She thanked him gratefully, and they proceeded at once to the arbor, as it wanted but a few minutes of the appointed time. Arrived there, Leonora began to have serious fears for her lover, should the dreaded artist be in an angry mood.

"Only do one thing more for me," she pleaded, "stand behind this grape-vine. Come if I call, but for my sake keep quiet if I do not."

Somerton promised, and before withdrawing her hold upon his arm, Leonora leaned her head against it, and pressed fervently that beloved protection. Somerton being concealed, five minutes of most disagreeable suspense followed. Then steps were heard approaching, and a man muffled in a cloak, so that even his face was concealed, stood before Leonora.

She gazed fearfully at the tall apparition, and asked in an almost inaudible voice,

"Are you Mr. Amory?"

"I am."

"I am ready to redeem my deeply lamented promise," she faltered—then from terror and distress feeling herself fainting, she gasped Mr. Somerton's name, as her eyes closed, and instantly felt herself folded in supporting arms, while a voice she loved called her every endearing name, and she felt that the hated fulfilment of her promise was not demanded of her. Slowly recovering she looked anxiously around for the artist. The cloak was enfolding her, yet no one was visible but Mr. Somerton.

"How is it?" she asked, "has he gone?"

"My cruel deception is at an end," said her lover, "I entreat you to listen to my justification. One, whose malice I now know how to appreciate, told me to beware, that I had not yet had an opportunity of seeing your real character—that you were, in short, a heartless flirt, to whom each new admirer was welcome, and who kept faith with none. I had no right to doubt you. Can you ever forgive me?" A pleasant smile, and gentle pressure assured him of Leonora's leniency. Still she did not understand the matter.

"I hope you and that hateful artist are not the same person," she said, "his name was Amory."

"So was mine dearest. I changed it just before leaving England, as a maternal uncle left me a very handsome fortune upon condition that I should take his name, and though I consented to bear it in my every day character, I will never have my artist's name any but my own. Writers have a 'nomme de plume,' why should not I have a nomme de brush? If you have forgiven me, dearest, tell me which you will consent to bear?"

"I can never endure the name of Amory," she

said, "Mr. Amory may devote himself to his pictures, I claim only Mr. Somerton's devotion."

"Leonora, your promise to Mr. Amory is yet unfulfilled."

"Since Mr. Amory has not come to claim it, I am absolved from that detestable promise."

"Why do you still hate poor Mr. Amory? Has he not proved himself a self-denying individual? Yes, Leonora, though I had your promise, and though my love has been deep and warm as ever lover's was, you know that I have never even touched my lips to the tips of those dear fingers, I have not dared to ask it. Yet this evening the yearning tenderness of my heart toward you, made me feel that I was denying myself too great a privilege. I was about to tell you so as you stood by the window after waltzing, when my pretended friend whispered his warning, and the fiendish resolve entered my mind to try you; to see how sacred you considered a positive promise, to know how flattery would affect you, and also to discover whether you would use concealment toward me. You stood the test nobly, my Leonora. Can you forgive me? Remember that I have one excuse to give in palliation of my fault—it was not a long-

premeditated scheme, but a sudden impulse to which I gave way, under provocation, for my jealousy was roused, and besides, I thought it was time I had that kiss. Oh, Leonora, prove that I am forgiven. Freely give Mr. Amory his due."

"Not to Mr. Amory, but to Mr. Somerton," persisted Leonora, as she permitted the last named favored individual to take both principal and interest of the debt.

"Leonora, you have uttered sweet words, that the artist Amory thrilled to hear. It was *his* love you won. Had you known how his heart beat when you were gazing at his picture, and turned weeping from it, you would have pitied him. Oh, you must love the name of Amory, which now indeed shall be made one of never-dying fame!"

"Never, never so well as Somerton!" and thus finding he could lead the usually timid girl, to give utterance to words which made music in his heart, he never omitted an opportunity of praising Mr. Amory. Mr. Somerton being instantly quoted as the only pattern of manly excellence, and Mr. Amory's cruel conduct remaining forever unforgiven.

## HOW AUNT EMILY FELL IN LOVE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "DREAMING AND WAKING."

NEAR to the old family mansion was a park, thickly studded with Catalpa trees; and half buried memories rise, like spirits of the past, at the mention of that park. Beautiful aunt Emily! Once more let me see you as you looked in those days. There is a vision of fragrant blossoms—a perfumed breath of summer air, that comes laden with its wreath of sweets—winding paths, that writhe amid the soft, velvety greensward—while the bright face of my young aunt is mingled with the scene, and I rove about in wild enjoyment, filling my little India basket with the fallen blossoms. Summers were more lovely then than they are now—skies were bluer—and sunshine brighter.

Beautiful aunt Emily! In a white dress, with a half-blown rose in her dark hair, she was the queen of love and beauty; half arrayed, and lying carelessly upon a couch, as I have often seen her in warm weather, she looked a fit impersonation of the Grecian goddess; standing, moving, or sitting, she was beautiful still. My charming aunt commenced early the career of a belle and a beauty, as I have often heard it said that she received her first offer when she was only three months old; but the heart then laid at her feet would doubtless have proved more acceptable had it been made of sugar. Aunt Emily, however, remained quite unspoiled by the adulation that she received, and thought no more of it than of the wind that played with her long curls. I used to wonder why she married my uncle—he was so quiet, and appeared to content himself with looking at her; but it happened in this wise:

One Sunday afternoon in summer, a young gentleman with a fine figure, intelligent countenance, and one of the sweetest smiles in the world, advanced with an irresolute step up the avenue of the elm trees that led up to the house. He walked slowly, as though loath to diminish the distance between himself and the door; and as he proceeded his eyes glanced furtively around as though seeking something to prop his failing courage.

Aunt Emily had at this time scarcely emerged from childhood; and with a girliah feeling of mischief, she sat quite concealed by a thicket of elm branches that reached her window, enjoying

the awkward position of her bashful admirer. This, then, was the youth who had serenaded her night after night—who had sent her sonnets of original poetry that were really beautiful, for Walter Mardell was as talented as he was bashful—who had avoided looking at her whenever they met, and gazed fondly at her shadow in the distance—about to undergo the fearful ordeal of a first appearance in the house of his lady-love.

Now it so happened that my grandfather by no means approved of lovers or love-making, and considered aunt Emily a silly child who contrived to make a great deal of trouble; he, therefore, took upon himself the post of dragon, and kept a watchful eye upon everything that approached the premises in a hat and coat.

Walter's timid lifting of the great brass knocker was answered by the old gentleman with a suddenness that startled him; and not finding him disposed to speak, my grandfather led the way into the parlor. Walter dropped into a seat without waiting for an invitation; and after some time, he observed in an embarrassed tone, that "it was a very fine day."

"Very," said my grandfather, drily.

Another painful pause; during which the old gentleman looked as inflexible as a Roman father, and the expression of Walter's face would almost have extorted pity from a savage. But it extorted none from my grandfather.

"Did you wish to see any one in particular?" he asked, with a grim smile.

"I—I—came to see *you*!" stammered the unfortunate youth.

"Very much obliged," replied his tormentor.

Walter could stand it no longer. He had twisted his eyes into all sorts of painful corners to avoid my grandfather's fixed stare; and suddenly, as one plunges into a cold bath of a winter morning, he jerked out the question:

"Is Miss Emily at home?"

"I hope so," was the discouraging reply.

The room was swimming around him, and he made a hasty retreat. As he was rushing through the avenue of elms, an unlucky step brought him in contact with a gnarled root that grew out into the path; and aunt Emily laughed involuntarily as she saw him stretched on the graveled walk.

It only needed this to render his mortification complete. With a reproachful look at his unsympathizing idol, he shook off the dust from his feet, and left the inhospitable premises. \* \* \* \*

Aunt Hilsbury always said that "she never made but one match, and that was the happiest one that she ever knew." She certainly did not make *that*, but if she made no others it was not for want of trying, for so notorious were her match-making propensities, that I really believe every animal on her farm had its better half. It was certainly owing to her door-step that the match in question progressed so rapidly; and as aunt Emily always declared that she was caught in a trap, and made the victim of a previously arranged plot, perhaps the old lady was more guilty than the jury of her relations were disposed to pronounce her.

Aunt Hilsbury had firmly made up her mind to dispose of the beauty of the family; she had cast approving eyes upon a young lawyer of her acquaintance, handsome, talented, and fascinating; and nothing remained but to bring them together.

Aunt Hilsbury's house was a delightful place for a country party, except that the door which opened from the entrance hall into the parlor was provided with a step that seemed expressly intended to entrap the unwary. There were legends attached to that step almost as worthy of remembrance as those connected with any haunted castle, or ancient trysting-place. There many a bashful lover had found himself prematurely brought to his knees before his cruelly mischievous ladye-love—there many a staid dignitary had picked himself up with an awful frown and a bruised shin—and downfalls and tumbles innumerable commemorated the spot.

Aunt Hilsbury, having superintended the adornment of her beautiful niece, was escorting

her to the parlor in triumph to preside over one of those social gatherings for which country villages are proverbial.

"Take care of the step!" she exclaimed, but the warning came too late; and surprised and frightened, aunt Emily fell, not to the ground, but into the hands of a young gentleman who advanced most opportunely to her rescue.

"In such a hurry to be introduced," he observed, with a smile, "that I have almost upset Miss Hammersford."

No one noticed her mishap, and aunt Emily looked up in a state of grateful surprise. The voice was somewhat familiar, and when aunt Hilsbury introduced him she fully recognized Walter Mardell—but how altered and improved! Every trace of bashfulness had vanished; and the eyes that formerly sought the ground in painful confusion were now beaming with intelligence and respectful admiration.

Aunt Emily ceased her somewhat protracted survey with a smile and a blush, as she whispered,

"You were very kind—how can I ever thank you?"

"*Those who have fallen themselves know how to feel for others,*" was the reply.

Years had passed since that Sunday afternoon, but aunt Emily now saw the whole scene, and the reproachful look seemed bent upon her still. She knew not what to do with her eyes; but finally she looked just where she would have given worlds *not* to look, and both laughed.

Having both *fallen* in love, to aunt Hilsbury's great delight, they were married; and being of tender years, my sentiments upon the occasion were: "Happy are those who marry and are given in marriage," because I supposed that married people were always eating wedding-cake.

## LOVE AND MANŒUVRING.

BY MISS MARY ANN PARKER.

### CHAPTER I.

Two ladies were sitting, one fine summer day, in a pleasant room in the country-house of Mr. Montfort.

The younger of the two, a girl of seventeen, was ensconced in the depth of a huge arm-chair, luxuriously cushioned; her feet rested upon a stool, and her hand held a book with which she seemed intently occupied. Seen thus, with her hair put carelessly away from her forehead, and her blue eyes fixed upon the page before her, she was a pretty object enough; not brilliant nor striking, but youthful, fair, and sweet. Her companion was in the very prime and splendor of beauty; it seemed as though nature must have exhausted herself in producing such a masterpiece, and have fashioned nought but the plainest womankind for a twelve-month afterward. There was light enough in the dark eyes of Clara Castleton to illumine half a dozen faces of the ordinary mould, while the rich bloom of her cheek, and the grace of her slight, but rounded form, would have made her charming, had they been her sole attractions. It was not easy to guess her age; yet it could be seen that she had passed the limits of girlhood, and of early youth. She too was reading, though, as it appeared, without much interest, for her glance often wandered from the page to the ceiling, the window, and the girl in the arm-chair.

"Well, Ella," she asked, rather impatiently, "how are you progressing?"

"I have almost done—only a few pages more."

Soon the last word was read; Ella laid down the volume with a sigh, and fell into a reverie. A young man now appeared at the half open door.

"Come in, Charles," said the beautiful Clara; "I make you heartily welcome; I am quite desolate for want of company. Our little cousin here has hardly bestowed a word upon me during the whole morning."

"Here is my excuse," said Ella, holding up her book, "*Les Confidences*" of Lamartine.

"*Confidences*, indeed!" cried Charles, "poured into the sympathizing bosom of any one who will pay fifty cents for them! and a precious set of secrets they are that he entrusts to us!"

"Oh, don't say a word against them!" interposed Clara. "Ella has risen from their perusal, quite penetrated with the conviction that the author is the noblest, most sensitive, refined and exalted of human beings."

"You exaggerate a little," said Ella, smiling, "but I certainly *did* think the book displays great talent, and exquisite sensibility."

"Poor child!" observed Charles, compassionately; "and you believe in the reality of the emotion that spreads itself out on paper for the whole world to gaze upon? and you did not see the egregious vanity that pervaded every line and paragraph?"

"Indeed, I did not," Ella answered, briefly.

"I regret having read that book," continued Charles, (for so we may as well call him, though he was generally known as Mr. Montfort, a young gentleman of fine person and large estate,) "Louis Blanc's magnificent description of Lamartine, and his own course during the Revolution, won my admiration and reverence in a great degree. But Raphael and '*Les Confidences*,' cured me completely."

"If you admired his course," said Ella, "I do not understand how this record of events, which occurred years before, could alter your opinion."

"Simply because it betrays such vanity that it makes me believe his whole life an attempt at self-glorification. During the Revolution the eyes of Christendom were fixed upon him, and he acted in the way best calculated to secure applause."

"For shame!" cried the young girl, with generous indignation—"did you never hear that those who are most conscious of base motives in themselves are quickest to suspect them in others?"

Charles colored. "I admit the charge," he said; "I am *not* conscious of very exalted motives for any of my actions, I do what pleases me, without reference to other matters. Selfishness is thus, you see, my besetting sin; 'tis a miserable vice, but universal, as you will find if you live long enough, my little cousin: will she not, Clara?"

"Witnesses are not required to criminate themselves," returned Miss Castleton.

"I should be sorry to believe the whole world

actuated merely by selfishness," said Ella; "I would fain think you the exception, not the rule, cousin Charles."

"That is not fair, I insist; I am no worse than the rest of my kind. Perhaps, however, you took my assertion too literally—there are, doubtless, occasional examples of heroic self-denial. But, generally speaking, it is *chacun pour soi* *meme* in society. This sort of selfishness is not very dreadful; it is under the restraint of certain conventional modes of thinking, and forms of politeness; it does not interfere with the practice of perfect civility and good breeding; so it is a very harmless matter, after all."

"Nothing is harmless," said Ella, "which makes us pursue our own pleasure, regardless of the rights of others."

"Oh, you little moralist! But were you not reading away very selfishly just now, while poor Clara sat here devoured by *ennui*?"

"Not at all," said Miss Castleton; "I had just commenced this novel when she came in from the garden, and was so absorbed that I hardly looked up to greet her, so she very naturally sought amusement in her own way. My attention soon flagged, however; it is only young girls like you, dear Ella, that can go through a book with unabated interest; when you reach my age you will find the most brilliant novel tedious after the first hour's reading."

"What a world-weary, misanthropic pair!" said Ella, laughing. "Well, I will leave you to relate your mutual experiences, while I give Mrs. Ball directions about the dinner. We are to have guests, perhaps you know—two gentlemen from Boston." And she departed, "on hospitable thought intent."

"Charles," said Miss Castleton, when they had been alone a few minutes, "may I give you a piece of valuable advice?"

"Speak! I am all attention."

"Well, then—if you will pardon the liberty—you do not take the best means of getting on with Ella."

The young man colored, but answered, "In what do I err?"

"In speaking of human nature in such a cynical, suspicious manner."

"My dear Clara, what have I said of that kind to-day?"

"Not much to-day, I grant; but generally you show such a distrust of men, and such a contempt for those who do not think with you. Now Ella is young—only seventeen—and has all the beautiful trust so natural at her age. If it be a weakness or a mistake, it is surely an enviable one, and not worthy of contumely or ridicule,

such as you generally bestow upon it. You will make her dislike you thoroughly if you persist."

"Then I will abandon it at once."

"That was well said! There is some comfort in giving advice to you, you follow it so readily. If you were talking to some one like me, instead of Ella, your manner, so full of a benevolent contempt of your hearer's inexperience, would be quite flattering."

"Why so? I do not understand."

"Because it would imply that you thought her very young, when she was in fact, decidedly *passee*."

"As if you were *passee*, Clara! Pshaw, you are—I will not say what, for fear of offending you."

"Do not," she answered, gravely; "I was not seeking to draw forth a compliment. Apart from the matter, as effecting Ella's feelings toward you, has she not time enough to learn such bitter wisdom? for that it is bitter you well know. Is it not far happier to be often deceived than always suspicious? I think, too, that your feelings are carried to excess; in early youth, perhaps, you trusted fully, and were betrayed—and now you avenge yourself by suspecting evil in all you meet. You ought, on the contrary, to preserve a calm neutrality, thinking neither well nor ill of any one till you have seen him proved. This is the difference between you and Ella—you are walking together in the garden, and she plucks a rose, admiring, the while, its perfect loveliness of form and color—you at once pick it to pieces to discover the worm, which, you fancy, is at the core—and are even a little disappointed if you do not find it there. Let Ella go on; let the rose be to her the queen of flowers—the world the home of goodness, honor, all heroic attributes—she will learn the truth soon enough. And now, having bestowed my valuable counsel upon you, I must go and dress for dinner."

When Clara reached her own room, she sank into a chair by the window, instead of proceeding to the duties of the toilet. "Matters are in a very fair way," she thought; "I have put him completely off his guard by showing him that I know of his attachment to Ella; after that of course, he will never dream that I have any designs upon him. It was a good idea to speak as I did about his want of faith in human nature. The poor youth fancies himself so wonderfully *blase*, and the subject of such melancholy experiences! As if he, at twenty-two—for he cannot be older—knew anything of the world! However, it suits my purpose to agree with him. I think I have a fair prospect of success. To be

sure Ella has sweet blue eyes, and an innocent, confiding look that is very captivating; but I am as attractive in my own way, and I know his tastes, and can adopt myself to them. As for Ella's feelings, I don't believe she cares for him—and even if she did I should not feel many scruples of conscience. She is so young, and would soon recover from the disappointment—and then with her splendid fortune she may have her choice of husbands, while poor I must look out for myself. Yet I wish it were otherwise," she added; I do hate this scheming, for it is most unwomanly. Oh, that some respectable man, not absolutely old enough to be my grandfather, and with a nice, comfortable income, would loose his heart to me! I would make him an excellent wife, I know I would!"

Do not be too greatly shocked, dear girls, at this specimen of the fair Clara's reveries—we fear that the musings of many a bright beauty in her boudoir would look no better, if taken down verbatim by a correct reporter.

## CHAPTER II.

MR. MONTFORT, Ella's father, and the uncle of Miss Castleton and Charles, had formerly been a New York merchant, in which position he was noted for business talent and strict integrity; qualities which, combined with the favor of the blind goddess, had secured to him the ample fortune he now enjoyed. He was a widower, Mrs. Montfort having died when Ella was but thirteen. He had been exceedingly attached to his wife, and showed his regard for her memory, *not* by marrying again within a year, (as some aver that a man will do who has found matrimony a pleasant state,) but by devoting himself to her child. He comforted Ella in all her girlish troubles, listened indulgently to her merry talk, encouraged her in study; in short, was a tender and loving father to his motherless child. As she grew older, there was a perfect friendship and sympathy between them; and if Mr. Montfort had ever planned to take unto himself a second partner, it is possible that he and Ella would have talked the matter over and agreed upon the person most suitable to fill the place. Alas, that she, the loving, petted daughter—but we will not anticipate.

Clara Castleton had been left an orphan at an early age, with just sufficient means to keep her from being dependant on her relations, and had been received into the family of a rich cousin, who had numerous children and a kindly heart. She was admired wherever she appeared—the belle of every company—yet she had lived to

behold her six plain cousins, Jane, Susan, Ann, Sophia, Sarah, and Eliza, make advantageous matches, while she remained in stately maidenhood. She was tired of this position of affairs, and when Mr. Montfort invited her to visit his delightful place upon the Hudson, she accepted, in the hope that something might there occur to change her destiny. Charles Montfort, Ella's cousin but not her own, was staying in the house when she arrived. She found him an agreeable person, he found her the most beautiful woman he had yet encountered. Their mutual relationship to Ella formed a passport to a more unreserved and cordial intimacy than often exists between those not connected by ties of blood. Clara had at first no thought of bringing her charms to bear upon this new friend, he was too young, she thought, to be available—but when some weeks passed by and no "party" more eligible appeared, she turned her attention, as we have seen, to the conquest of his heart, and the winning of his hand.

On the day in question she came down dressed for dinner some time before Ella, who had been much occupied, made her appearance. She was richly and gaily attired, for she liked bright colors, and they became her well; something about them harmonized with the glow of her brown complexion and the dark lustre of her eyes. Two gentlemen were conversing with her uncle when she entered. They were quite wonder-struck at her beauty, and had hardly recovered from the surprise when Mr. Montfort presented them as Mr. Herbert and Mr. Clarke. "The two gentlemen from Boston, I suppose," thought Clara; "I had forgotten their existence."

Ella now came in, looking very sweetly in a dress of clear blue muslin. She gave a little start on seeing Mr. Herbert, but welcomed him with ease; Mr. Clarke was an old friend, and she shook hands with him very cordially, inquiring after Mrs. Clarke and the little ones. "So he is married," observed Clara, in her own mind. At the very last moment Mr. Charles Montfort made his appearance, *en grande tenue*; he being one of those *blases* described by Thackeray, who still keep up sufficient interest in mundane affairs to be well dressed on all occasions.

"Glad to see you, Herbert," he exclaimed, "it is quite an unexpected pleasure; when did you arrive? and how have you been since that delightful month we spent at Rockaway last summer?"

"At Rockaway!" said his uncle, turning to Ella, "why you were there too, were you not, my child?"

"Yes, sir," she answered, with a slight blush;

"I recognized Mr. Herbert at once, but he did not remember me."

"Very likely—you have grown a good deal since then, and I do not suppose he took much notice of a little Miss like you, even at the time."

"You are quite mistaken," said Mr. Herbert, "I knew Miss Montfort at once, but waited to see whether she remembered our acquaintance before I presumed to mention it."

Dinner was announced—Mr. Montfort took out Clara, Ella followed with Mr. Clarke—Mr. Herbert and Charles brought up the rear. At table Mr. Clarke sat next to Clara—he was a lively little gentleman, and entertained her very well. Charles was at his cousin's side, and now and then addressed her in a rather low and confidential tone. Mr. Herbert and his host kept up an animated conversation. Clara glanced at them occasionally, and seeing Mr. Montfort, so portly, so genial, so eminently respectable, as he presided at his own table, she wished in her heart that he were anything but her uncle. Her neighbor, meanwhile, talked assiduously; he had just been visiting his friend Herbert's place on the Merrimac, and dwelt with enthusiasm on its beauties.

"It is a true Garden of Eden," he said; "my wife and I often tell him that it only needs an Eve to make the resemblance perfect; but he is incorrigible—a confirmed old bachelor, Miss Castleton."

At these words a light broke in upon Clara's mind; she had been so occupied in contemplation of her morning's project that Mr. Herbert had received but passing notice from her—she now honored him with a more close examination. He was not young—near forty, apparently; neither was he handsome, but he looked gentlemanly and agreeable. And then he was well-established in the world, of course; for poor people do not own paradises on the Merrimac, (or any other river.) Clara's reflections lasted through the remaining courses of the dinner, and when the cloth was removed, and dessert upon the table, her mind was made up. She abandoned Charles for Mr. Herbert. "It is a great deal better plan," she thought, "Charles was ridiculously young for me. But if Mr. Herbert should be engaged, or in love? I don't believe he is—I'll run the risk, at any rate." She was here aroused from her reverie by hearing Charles exclaim, "I don't quite credit your account, Herbert—you make the *Senorita* a little too obliging."

"What is it?" inquired Clara.

"Herbert has been telling a story of his Rio

experience. He was dining with some one of the dignitaries of the town, and they were speaking of the Opera just brought out—he mentioned some song in it which he particularly admired, and the hostess, turning to her daughter who sat near, requested her to sing it. The young lady finished the mouthful she was eating, laid down her knife and fork, and sang the air deliciously—she then resumed the implements of warfare, and finished her dinner."

"It actually happened," said Mr. Herbert, "and I was enchanted with the *Senorita's* filial obedience as well as with her voice—which was delicious, as you say."

"Fancy a New York belle requested to do such a thing," said Mr. Montfort—"oh, the excuses we should hear. 'Mamma, you *know* I never sing *that*'—or 'I should be glad to oblige you, but I'm so hoarse that I can hardly sing a note.' Charles, ask your cousin for 'Summer Night,' this evening, and she will go through the whole vocabulary of excuses—and *she* is not half as bad as Clara."

Dinner over, Mr. Montfort proposed a walk about the grounds, and the party was distributed very much in accordance with Clara's wishes; Charles and Ella strayed away by themselves, Mr. Clarke and his host walked leisurely along, discussing horticultural matters, and Mr. Herbert offered his arm to Clara. Self-possessed as she usually was, she felt no little embarrassment at finding herself thus alone with a person on whom she had designs of such importance, and she could hardly find a word to say. Her attendant was likewise quietly disposed, and they passed, almost without a remark on either side, through the green alleys of the garden. At length they came to the brow of a hill, whence a fine prospect of the adjacent country, with its fields of waving grain, its smiling meadows, and forests in all their summer glory met the eye—while, through the midst, flowed the broad Hudson to the sea. Clara uttered an exclamation of delight, and the face of her companion brightened.

"I wonder why this prospect pleases us so much better than the garden itself," he observed. "The latter is certainly better kept, embellished too with a profusion of beautiful flowers, and all its fine points worked up with care and taste; but in looking at it we feel that there is something wanting. Here, on the contrary, the eye takes in the scene with perfect satisfaction. That distant range of hills—the blue river—those woods, with their dark, thick foliage—how glorious they are! Why is it that *extent* is so desirable in a landscape? It pleases me, but I cannot analyze the pleasure."

"Perhaps because it suggests ideas of grandeur and sublimity," said Clara—"a vast range for the eye leads to a vast range of thought, in an untrammelled mind."

"You have seen the ocean?" inquired Mr. Herbert.

"Oh, yes, often, at Rockaway and Newport."

"I do not mean in that way precisely," he replied, with a smile, "you only *looked* at it there, you did not really *see* it, or, if you did, it was only with the outward sense. To see the ocean really you must not go down to the beach with a bathing party, or drive along the sands with a gay company—no, you must be alone. Twilight is the best time—you stroll down to the water's edge, and looking out upon the limitless waste, give yourself up entirely to the emotions which it awakens."

"And are they pleasant?" asked Clara.

"Yes, but saddening—the wild expanse of waters, whose bounds the eye seeks in vain, images Eternity, and makes our little life seem so poor, so insignificant. I think if Napoleon ever felt the vanity of his achievements and his glory, it must have been when, as an exile at St. Helena, he gazed upon the sea."

"Nonsense!" said Mr. Clarke, who had come up unperceived. "Napoleon was not a sentimentalist like you, but a practical, common-sense man. When he looked at the ocean he fancied it swarming with ships-of-the-line, and thought if it were so, how soon he would consign Sir Hudson Lowe to the imperial prison quarters."

"Perhaps so—we'll not dispute the point; but is not this a magnificent view? You don't get it where you are standing—come forward—a little to the right. There! what a sweep of vision."

"Exactly so—and so cunningly devised, too," said Mr. Clarke. "The trees and tall shrubbery quite shut you in till you reach the destined spot, and there the whole thing breaks upon you at once. Your uncle is a man of taste, Miss Castleton."

"He is a man of wealth," responded Clara, laughing. "In these days of landscape-gardeners we may purchase taste if we do not chance to possess it naturally."

"That is a libel, Clara," said Mr. Montfort, who now joined the group. "I need not ask the advice of Downing, or any one else, in laying out my grounds. To prove it, just look to the left, and see how nicely I contrived to bring that little summer-house, covered with roses, into view. You would never suspect that it was a summer-house; it looks like a hanging-garden on a small scale." His hearers of course admired it properly. "But where are Charles and Nelly?" he

continued—"those two children have certainly a remarkable faculty for straying away by themselves."

Mr. Clarke laughed heartily. "It is a very common faculty among young folks of their age," he observed.

### CHAPTER III.

CLARA was very well impressed with the *endurableness* of Mr. Herbert, and her own prospects of success. During the afternoon they had conversed much together, and he was interested, and evidently sought to draw her into a free expression of her sentiments and feelings. "I see my way clearly," thought she; "I must be deeply imbued with a love of nature and of the beautiful; rather reserved, in general, about giving voice to my opinions, but occasionally betrayed into an enthusiastic forgetfulness of all but the subject under discussion; I must have the deepest reverence for all that is great, and good, and true. I understand my *role*, and shall play it well."

Alas! poor Clara! a certain glance which Mr. Herbert gave toward Ella that night, as, in her sweetest tones, she sang "Auld Robin Grey," convinced her that the road to conquest was not so easy as she had imagined. Instead of marching forward to the citadel of Mr. Herbert's heart, and taking undisputed possession of those quarters, she had a rival to dislodge. "And such a rival, too!" she mentally ejaculated; "I wonder why Ella need have been made so pretty—surely her fortune is attractive enough for one person."

Miss Castleton was much too wise, however, to allow her inward discomfiture to become apparent; she was unusually animated, and looked so beautiful, that Charles Montfort could not help saying to Mr. Herbert, as they stood a little apart from the company—"The loveliest woman I ever beheld in my life!"

Mr. Herbert smiled at this enthusiasm, and replied, "The *handsomest*, perhaps—not the loveliest."

When Clara entered the breakfast-room the following morning, she found it already tenanted by her cousin, who sat in the broad window-seat, engaged with a book.

"As usual!" said Clara, laughing. "My poor child, your head will be completely turned. Your imagination needs something to quiet, not to stimulate it. You should read history, or works on Political Economy, or one of Mr. Emerson's essays, instead of these delusive romances."

"Each in its proper place, my dear mentor," replied Ella; "you forget that I am only just released from school, where for seven long years

history has been daily drilled into my unwilling brain. Do allow me a little relaxation."

"You find novels charming, do you not?" inquired Clara.

"Many, I hardly care to glance at—a few delight me beyond expression—I can read them again and again with new pleasure."

"I wonder if you ever feel as I did in my young days," observed Miss Castleton, "when the hero and heroine are having an interview, and the author says, 'He will not repeat what followed; lovers' conversations are rarely interesting to any but themselves,' or something of that sort. Did you ever feel disappointed that he did not give their tender passages, word for word?"

Ella blushed slightly, as young girls will when the great subject is alluded to—"I will confess to the feeling," she said. "When the hero and heroine are rational, intelligent people, one is naturally curious to know what they have to say to each other."

"It is surprising," continued Clara, "that novelists can have the audacity to pourtray love as they do—love in man, particularly. The hero of a story ought to be called '*the fictitious personage in it, par excellence.*'"

"Why so?"

"Oh, he is represented as such a devoted being; so impressed with the exalted state of the fair creature whom he adores, and so distrustful of his claims upon her notice. And then when she returns his passion, he is so eternally grateful, so tender, so constant through trials and tribulations of every description."

"Well?" said Ella, (who in her heart thought all this very natural.)

"The truth is just as different as you can imagine. A man commonly thinks well enough of himself to believe that women think well of him too, and is rarely troubled with the slightest diffidence about recommending himself to any lady who may strike his fancy—I will not say touch his heart. If he proposes, and meets with a refusal, it does not hurt him much; if he is accepted, he is pleased for a while—perhaps, if it is a short engagement, the enchantment lasts a little beyond the honeymoon. But if a year intervene between acceptance and the time fixed for marriage, he is very apt to change his mind, to be struck by some new face, throw himself at the feet of some new idol. None of your novel constancy for me, Ella dear; I don't believe in it, I have seen too much to the contrary."

"What a dreary place you and Charles would make out this world to be," said the girl—"are there no such things, think you, as real love, real truth?"

"There may be," said Clara, "but I have never chanced to meet with them. It is my private opinion that the present state of society is too frivolous for the growth of any very permanent sentiment. Once in an age we find a warm, young heart like yours, my cousin, full of faith and devotion—it becomes cold and skeptical, however, after a few years experience. Men of the world like nothing better than some such fresh, innocent nature to try their skill upon. Do you carry yourself with caution during your first season, Ella, or you will find your heart stolen before you know it, by some one who has had no other thought than to amuse himself with your pretty looks and artless interest."

She spoke these words with some bitterness, though in a light tone; Ella looked at her in surprise. "You wish to warn me particularly," she said; "you think then that I am in danger? You would not have me suffer—as you have suffered, perhaps."

Clara understood the implied question. "If I have suffered," she replied, "it is past; I did not and I do not complain. For you, dear girl, I only say—be prudent. Do not trust too readily to affection that does not declare itself. Here are the gentlemen," she added, hurriedly—"we have had an odd conversation, while waiting here for breakfast, have we not?"

#### CHAPTER IV.

MR. CLARKE was to leave this morning, but Mr. Herbert was easily persuaded to prolong his stay. Days—even weeks—went by, and still he lingered. During this time he was much with Miss Castleton; Ella avoided him, and sought Charles Montfort's society instead. Further acquaintance proved him to be what Clara had at first supposed; a man of sense and taste, with a good deal of latent enthusiasm, and a deep religious sentiment. With such a person she could not sympathize to any extent; they could admire together the beauties of nature or of art; they could talk of mutual acquaintances, of operas they had heard, and places they had visited—but they went no further. Her nonchalance was a check upon the full expression of his feelings—his religious allusions made her feel awkward and uncomfortable.

Mr. Herbert's long stay began to create no little gossip in the country roundabout. People who knew nothing of the antagonisms in his and Clara's characters, who saw that they rode together, talked together, walked and drove out together, and liked each other's society, said it would be a match; and when Mr. Herbert actually

took a house in the neighborhood, and declared his intention of purchasing whenever an opportunity offered, the matter was looked upon as settled.

"I should think Rawson's place would suit him exactly," said young Norbert Glover, "and Rawson would be glad to sell, I know. Poor fellow, he has never been the same person since his wife died."

"Don't be in haste about Mr. Rawson's selling," said his amiable sister, a young lady on the shady side of thirty; "such violent grief never lasts long. He will be about as inconsolable as widowers generally are, and will need his place for a new bride before the year is over."

"He deserves a wife, and a good one, too," said Norbert, "so let him keep Green Park if he needs it, though Miss Castleton would make a splendid mistress for it. Fancy her moving along in her stately way under those superb old trees. I tell you, Virginia, that woman has put me quite out of conceit with the rest of your sex, and I shall write myself down a bachelor till I meet another like her."

"How absurd you are, Norbert! She is very well-looking, rather striking in appearance, perhaps, and dresses with some skill, but to think of calling her beautiful!"

"I am not the only one, my dear. Langford and Crawley, and even your particular favorite, Rensselaer Cobb, are wonderfully taken with her. Mr. Herbert is a fortunate man, and there are plenty to envy him."

"Indeed! I should think there might be as many to envy her! I do not call it such a remarkable piece of good fortune for a man of his wealth to get a penniless girl, even if she were as handsome as you seem to think her."

This little conversation is a very fair sample of the remarks which were made far and near, about the forthcoming match; the gentlemen praising the lady, the ladies praising the gentleman, and secretly thinking that he might have done quite as well to secure the fair hand of one of their number.

Clara, meanwhile, had been slow to believe that Mr. Herbert had any such intentions as were generally attributed to him. She felt that his manner toward her, though kind, was far from lover-like, and was convinced that the attraction which drew him to her uncle's house, day after day, was Ella, not herself. As weeks passed on, she was compelled to change her opinion. He never sought Ella—if he entered a room where they were together, it was to *her* side that he came, to *her* that he addressed himself. His manner toward the young girl was simply polite—

and her's to him was quiet and reserved, though not unfriendly. So that Clara, after all, began to think herself mistaken, and to believe that people were right when they said Mr. Herbert wished to marry her.

Here was a person of good family and good-breeding; one of whom she need never be ashamed, no matter where he were placed—a man of sense and refinement—and last, not least, of large estate. Was not this the match for which she had longed, to which she had looked forward as the ultimatum of her hopes and desires? What had she to do but to give her adorer an opportunity of offering himself, and then to accept him gracefully and cordially, and with a thankful heart?

Instead of this she dreaded to be left alone with him—she avoided a walk or a *tele-a-tete* in a quiet corner, lest he should speak the very words which she had once been so anxious to hear from his lips. What had changed her?

To tell the truth, Clara was in love—very truly and sentimentally in love with her cousin's cousin, Charles—or, as he was more generally called, Charley. How this change in her feelings came to be accomplished is more than we can tell. There is an odd perversity in our fancies about such matters, and we are very apt to fix our affections just where it is most inconvenient and uncomfortable for them to repose. We know that writers on the subject, and old ladies in general, affirm that a woman never should love a man till he has shown that he is in love with her, and that there is a great lack of feminine delicacy in caring for a person who does not care for you; but this, we suspect, is a mere matter of theory, and it is more than likely that these same old ladies had, in their youth, some cherished *romance du cœur* that never saw the light. Be that as it may, Clara was now completely changed from a manoeuvring, calculating girl, into a loving, unhappy woman. A few words spoken by Charles, as they stood on the piazza one moonlight evening, a few flowers which he had given her, were dearer than Mr. Herbert's numerous expressions of interest, more cherished than his most rare and beautiful bouquets.

Perhaps there can be no sadder feeling than that which sent a pang through Clara's heart when she caught a glimpse of her cousin's white dress through the trees, and knew that Charles was with her. At such times her eyes filled with tears, and she turned from the window in utter despondency. "It might have been so different," she thought. "Mr. Herbert liked Ella at first, and she would have liked him if I had not interfered between them. I should then at

least, have been spared the misery of seeing Charles devoted to another. I even think he might have loved me, for we are alike in many things—but that is all past now, and I have only myself to blame. I am rightly punished for seeking to degrade marriage to a mere matter of convenience, and for selfishly putting out of mind the happiness of others in the pursuit of my own weak, wicked plans. Mr. Herbert, too—if I had involved no happiness but my own in this wretched business I should not feel so badly, but to deceive a man of so much real worth”—here she paused. It happened, strangely enough, that she could not present Mr. Herbert to her mind in the light of a despairing lover.

Things were in this condition when Clara received a letter from her cousin Sarah, (who had married a millionaire) urging her to join their party at Saratoga. “You must be very dull from your long seclusion in the country,” she wrote, “and it will do you good to drink the water and see the people here. Saratoga was never fuller—every house crowded, and new arrivals every hour. Isn’t it delightful? Anne is with us; she came in the last steamer, and hurried on here without waiting to unpack her trunks. She has brought you some beautiful presents from Paris—the most elegant set of amethysts I ever saw, among other things. But you must come and see for yourself.”

Clara laid down the letter with a sigh, and some sentimental ideas about “gems” and “aching hearts” passed through her mind. A postscript to the epistle now caught her eye.

“If all I hear be true, I suppose you will have a certain person in your train. Ah, Clara, you have been very sly, but I forgive and congratulate; it is an excellent arrangement on all hands. Make my compliments to *le beau choix*.”

“How vexatious!” she cried, “I will go, though, if only to contradict this absurd report. It will save me the awkwardness of an explanation with Mr. Herbert for the present, and perhaps he will have changed his mind before we meet again. It may be a healthful diversion to my own feelings—but I fear it will not prove a cure.”

When her intention of quitting them was announced, the whole party was loud in expressions of regret, and endeavored to persuade her to remain—but no, she was convinced that it was wisest to go, and withstood their solicitations.

“Our attractions cannot weigh against those of Saratoga, of course,” said her uncle, “yet I flattered myself that we had made time pass pleasantly for you, even in this quiet spot.”

“You have, indeed,” she answered, her eyes

filling with tears in spite of the cheerful manner which she tried to assume; “I have enjoyed myself exceedingly, but Sarah is anxious that I should join her, and Anne has brought me such pretty things from France, that it is really worth a short journey to see them. So, with your good leave, I depart to-morrow morning.”

“When do you return?” inquired Charles Montfort.

“I do not know if at all,” she answered, carelessly; “Sarah will have some excursion planned by the time she is tired of Saratoga, and will wish me to accompany her.”

“Pooh!” said Mr. Montfort, disrespectfully, “what claim has she upon you? You must come here, to be sure, whenever you leave the Springs, and that will be soon; a week or two at such places is enough. Let us expect you, my dear—well, we will say three weeks from to-day, at the farthest.”

“I cannot promise,” she replied, “but if it can be arranged, I will come.”

“And you will find our present party unbroken,” said her uncle.

## CHAPTER V.

Thronged as Saratoga was with belles of all varieties, Clara’s arrival nevertheless created some excitement among the assembled votaries of fashion. So celebrated a beauty was an object of interest, to both gentlemen and ladies. All were anxious to see her, and all, when she became visible, acknowledged the perfection of her loveliness. It was unanimously agreed that she was by far the most beautiful among the many beautiful women who then graced the noted watering-place.

Of course she had plenty of attention; the social position of her friends would have secured it had her charms been far less brilliant. In ordinary times Clara enjoyed such things; she liked admiration, provided it were not too evident for good taste; she was fond of dress, and of opportunities to display her beauty. But now she was lonely in the midst of hundreds; dispirited, when all around was gaiety and animation.

A languid and uninterested manner was the natural result of this state of feeling. People who now met her for the first time thought her very dull, and those who had been most enraptured with her beauty were compelled to admit that she was “rather tame,”

“A perfect incubus, I say!” exclaimed Kitty Vaughn, a lively little coquette of eighteen; “I suppose that is what you call high-bred repose

of manner; I shall never be able to attain it, and I am not sorry, either."

"My dear, in what way has Miss Castleton offended?"

"Why, I at first was inclined to be very friendly, and to admire her and not be jealous in the least, but she repelled me in the coolest way imaginable. Not that she said or did anything rude, but she showed very plainly that she took no more interest in me or in my concerns than in those of the lady of the Great Mogul. And Charlotte Brinsley and Kate Morville have met with much the same treatment."

"Mortified vanity! it will do you good, every one of you!"

Long before the stipulated three weeks was over, Clara longed to be again at the pleasant country-seat on the Hudson. When the appointed day arrived, she was in better spirits than when she received the splendid set of amethysts, or listened to the graceful compliments of Lord —, then the cynosure of female eyes at Saratoga.

"Good-bye," said cousin Sarah, "and don't get moped to death in that dull house; the time you have spent there already has told upon you. I wish we had any way of getting you clear of your promise to the old gentleman; it would be so delightful for you to visit the Mammoth Cave; something so new and striking in the way of a tour."

"You must be as gay as you can without me," replied Miss Castleton, whose smiling face by no means betokened that ennui awaited her at the end of her journey.

"Foolish creature that I am!" she thought, "I am so delighted to go back. And why? What shall I meet there? They will be glad to see me, certainly, but Charles and Ella will be wrapped up in each other, and I shall be only a witness to their happiness. No matter, though—I will be happy in seeing him this once, and will not even remember that he belongs to another."

Pleasant anticipations cheered Clara on her way, and made tolerable even the dust and heat of the railway-car, and the crowded cabin of the steamboat. At the landing she found the carriage with Charles, Ella, and Mr. Montfort in waiting. They were delighted to see her; Ella kissed her affectionately, Mr. Montfort with paternal benignity—Charles looked on, and would have liked to kiss her too, we dare aver, but did not say so.

"Where is Mr. Herbert?" asked Clara, as they came in sight of his lodgings.

"Oh, you must ask Ella—*she knows*," said Mr. Montfort.

"He returned to Boston the day before yes-

terday," said Ella, gazing steadily out of the window.

Clara looked inquiringly at Charles and Mr. Montfort, and they returned her glance by an expression of mystery and amusement.

"Shall I tell your cousin all about it, my dear?" asked Mr. Montfort.

"Dear papa, *do be quiet*," she entreated, putting her hand on his lips, and blushing like a peony.

Clara considerably forbore all questioning till alone with Ella; then she said, "To-night, dear, shall I have the solution of this wonderful mystery?"

"Yes, if you care about hearing it."

"Of course I care about what interests you," returned her cousin.

When the little group dispersed, after a pleasant evening, Clara seated herself by the window in expectation of Ella. Soon the young girl entered timidly, and betook herself to a low stool in a dark corner of the room.

"Now then," said Miss Castleton, "we are to hear all about Mr. Herbert. Draw a little nearer, my child—here, I will put out the light, and then your blushes will be invisible."

So Ella sat there, with the moonlight streaming over her like a glory, and unfolded her tale. The attachment between herself and Mr. Herbert was of long standing, having lasted more than a year before it was revealed on either side. A mutual impression had been made at Rockaway, during the previous summer, but with her it was only a girlish fancy, and he had thought it so ridiculous for a man of his age to care for such a mere child, that he kept assiduously out of her way, in hopes of extinguishing the sentiment. He was unsuccessful, however, as people generally are in such attempts, and at last made up his mind to seek the young girl, and endeavor to make himself as dear to her as she had become to him.

"You remember, Clara, what you told me that morning in the breakfast-room about men of the world amusing themselves with women's feelings?" (Ay, Clara *did* remember it; with a pang of self-reproach and self-contempt.) "I did not really believe so unworthily of him, but I thought I would be very cautious and completely on my guard; so I always chose Charles for my companion. It appears that Mr. Herbert was quite jealous, and fancied me indifferent to him, when I was thinking of him all the time. I do not know that we should ever have understood each other, had it not been for a chance meeting in the rose-tree arbor, a day or two after you went to Saratoga. I do not know how it happened—

but it all came out—a few words explained every thing. And I am very happy, and so is Mr. Herbert, and we have made all sorts of good resolutions—and I hope if you see us twenty years from to-night, you will find us loving each other as much as we do now."

"I hope so, too, my darling, and can believe it. Mr. Herbert is worthy of you and will make you happy, I am sure. When is the important ceremony to take place?"

"In five or six weeks; Mr. Herbert has gone to Boston to arrange some necessary business, and after he returns we must begin to prepare for the wedding. Papa objected at first to our having such a short engagement, but William—Mr. Herbert that is—said that it had lasted more than a year in reality, and papa was obliged to yield."

"Which side of the argument did you espouse?"

"Neither—I remained perfectly neutral, and left them to decide as they could. After all, it makes but little difference, since we are to remain with papa. I shall not have to leave my old home or my old friends—is not that pleasant?"

"Very," said Clara, kissing her—"but it is growing late, and you will have pale cheeks to-morrow if I let you sit up longer. Good night, my love, and pleasant dreams—of course they will and must be pleasant."

Each sought her pillow; Ella was soon slumbering in the full enjoyment of those rosy visions which are born of youth, and hope, and love; but Clara lay awake through the long hours, her mind full of unquiet thought. She was inexpressibly relieved to find that Mr. Herbert and Ella were engaged; she believed them fitted for each other, and had often feared, of late, that Ella suffered from his coldness. Now, at least, she was free from all dread of unhappy consequences springing from her plans, and rejoiced more over their entire failure than she had ever done over the prospect of success. Then her heart bounded at the recollection that Charles had smiled when his uncle rallied Ella, and through the evening had betrayed none of the symptoms of a disappointed lover. "No, he does not care for *her*," she said—"but then he cares just as little for me"—and between sorrow, regret, and longing, the poor heart was sadly torn. One thing she felt most deeply; that, though Charles was free, she should never try to gain his admiration, nor induce him to marry her. Manœuvring to get him was revolting to her, now that she truly loved.

She rose early, and finding none of the household yet astir, took a quiet stroll through the garden. A slight shower had fallen during the

night, refreshing the herbage and the flowers; every leaf and spray glittered in the beams of the newly-risen sun. The perfect stillness, the fresh, pure air, soothed Clara's perturbed spirits; in that sweet, peaceful atmosphere grief seemed out of place, and hope but natural. Weary at last with walking, she sat down in the rose-tree arbor and fell into a mood of contemplation, in which pleasure predominated largely over sadness.

"Clara, Clara," called a voice, which brought the blood to her cheeks; "nay, don't rise; I have something to show you."

"What is it, pray?" she answered, with an effort at composure, as Charles appeared, "anything very rare or beautiful?"

"You shall be the judge," he said—and drew forth a small locket, exquisitely wrought; it opened with a spring, and revealed the "counterfeit presentment" of his own handsome features. It was not one of your shabby daguerreotypes, (which we marvel much that any youth should ever give his chosen) dark, indistinct and scowling—but a miniature painted on ivory, and doing justice to the good looks of its original. There was the bright brown hair—the blue eye, full of intelligence, and a careless *bonhomme*—all the points that joined to form a very pleasing countenance.

"It is an admirable likeness," observed Clara; "how much your mother will value it."

"Ahem!" said Charles, whose customary nonchalance had quite deserted him. "I do not intend it for her."

"For your sister then?"

"Nor for her, either—oh, Clara, dear, beloved Clara, can you not guess—"

We will not repeat the rest of his remarks; people do not generally have "their wits about them" sufficiently at such times to be very coherent or sensible—though they usually contrive to make themselves understood. And Clara *did* understand—with what a blessedness of heart only those who have suffered like her can comprehend—that she was all to Charles, as he had long been all to her.

"But about Ella?" she said, at last, rather doubtfully—"you cared for her at one time, I am sure?"

"Never," he answered, confidently. "You recollect that morning when you told me that I was not taking the best way to get on with her? How I longed then to show you that my heart was only yours!"

"I am glad you did not," she said, quickly; "but why were you so much with her lately? I certainly believed that you were deeply in love with her."

"And I as certainly believed that you were engaged to Mr. Herbert. Feeling as I did, it was not agreeable to meet you in his presence. I preferred solitude, or Ella's company."

"I am too happy," said Clara, after a pause; "it cannot last. Oh, Charles, are you *sure* that you will always love me as now?"

The young gentleman uttered all manner of enthusiastic protestations that she never, never would be less dear than at that very moment.

"I do not feel worthy of you," continued Clara, humbly; "and I am so old. By-and-bye you may regret it, and wish that you had chosen a younger wife. Oh, that would break my heart!"

"We will set that matter at rest immediately," he answered, with a smile—"how old are you, Clara?"

"I was twenty-nine on the tenth," she said. (Some women are never over twenty-eight, but she was not of their order.)

"I never should have guessed it from your appearance—and how old do you take me to be?"

"Twenty-two, or three—possibly twenty-four."

"Ah! I was twenty-eight on the tenth—our birthdays are the same. What is a year? You, who have so much the advantage in beauty and goodness can well afford me that one year."

A great deal of lover-like discourse followed this sober comparison of dates, but we do not intend to waste our own time and try our readers' patience by reporting it. Suffice it to say, that when the Montforts, father and daughter, met at the breakfast-table, their guests were nowhere visible. A search through the grounds ensued, and resulted in the discovery of the pair. Keen-eyed old Mr. Montfort did not let the crimson cheeks of Clara, and the half embarrassed, half defiant manner of Charles escape his notice. He

forbore comment, however, and they all went in to breakfast. That meal once over, Ella and he were duly enlightened—Mr. Montfort in his library by Charles—Ella, in the deepest recesses of her own room, by Clara, who showed all the blushing timidity of a girl of sixteen. Both approved the match, and were not *very* much surprised to hear of the "intention." Such matters are usually more obvious to spectators than to the interested parties.

A few weeks later, Ella and Clara resigned their maiden names, and gave their hands where their hearts had gone before. A day or two before the double wedding, Clara tremblingly confessed to her *fiance* the deceit and selfishness of which she had been guilty in manoeuvring, and he magnanimously forgave her, declaring that he loved her better than ever for the courage and frankness which led her to confide in him.

Both the wedded pairs are fortunate—in their different ways. Mr. Herbert and Ella lead a useful, unostentatious life, happy in their children, their father, their home—happiest in the favor of the Great Being whom they love and serve, and whom they daily bless for all His goodness to them.

It is ten years since Charles and Clara took their marriage vows. She has not faded in the least—is as brilliantly beautiful, and looks as young as on the summer morning when we first made her acquaintance. She makes a splendid *fine lady*—presides with grace at her luxurious table—is the handsomest woman at the opera. She lives in a complete whirl of balls and parties, and loves them, and loves admiration, yet still keeps a warm corner in her heart for the husband, who is just as fond and proud of her as in their honeymoon.

## "I DIDN'T THINK"

BY PHILA EARLE.

No, no, little one, you didn't think, as those quivering lips and wet eye-lashes testify. No, you didn't think, and in the tremulous tones with which you utter the words, we know that you plead for forgiveness, and it is granted you with a pardoning kiss upon your dimpled cheeks, and a caressing touch upon your golden curls. And you didn't think as you sprang from those gentle arms, with smiles dancing in your still tearful eyes, what fearfully true and solemn words, you in your childish grief had uttered.

The young mother, as she watched your innocent gambols, and noticed all your playful, winning ways, and felt in her heart the holiest and deepest of all earthly loves, a mother's love—*she* didn't think that far away in the dim impenetrable future, you might bring sorrow to her heart, and lines of grief on her brow, by becoming a wild, wayward, reckless youth, a sinful, selfish, wretched man. You, over whom she had watched in your innocent infancy, and whose head she had pillowed upon her bosom for many a weary hour, with a prayer in her heart for you, the sinless sleeper. You, whom she so petted, so loved. She never thought that when her footsteps faltered, her hair become tinged with silver, and her voice feeble and tremulous with age, that you would smile at her infirmities, laugh at her prayers, and leave her alone to go down the hill of life into the land of shades, with no earthly arm to lean upon, instead of the strong, manly one that should tenderly support her. But if she didn't think there would be so much grief, so many trials, so much anguish of heart before life's weary race was ended—*she did* think that when her earthly dreams were finished, there was a land of peace, and joy, far away beyond the grave, "where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest."

Joyous, beautiful maiden, you with the jetty curls, and long, dark eye-lashes, or you with the smiling blue eyes, and sunny golden hair, *you* didn't think when the world smiled upon you, petted you, and called you beautiful, that there was but such a little way between you and the darksome grave. When carelessly weaving fragrant flowers, and half-unclosed buds in your shining hair; and when the lids drooped over those liquid, earnest eyes so softly, and modestly

veiled their sweet love-light; *you* didn't think how soon those bands of silken hair would be folded gently back from the cold, damp brow; and those soft tresses laid away where the sunlight would never fall on them; and the death-angel's kiss rest heavily on the quivering lids, pressing them down closely over the dimming eyes. When bounding with a lightsome tread through the shadowy dance, or stealing away beneath the waving trees, on which the dew lay glisteningly, as the moonbeams were silvering over the leaves and resting upon the slender spears of bright green grass like rays of glory; *you* didn't think that ere the moon smiled upon the earth again so brightly, and lovingly, you would be laid where the wakeless lie. That loving hearts and trembling hands would do their last for you, and folding your little white hands calmly over your throbbless heart, give you up to the "sleep that knoweth no waking." That tearful eyes would look their last upon your sweet, beautiful face, and then close the coffin-lid over you forever. No, you never thought the angels would call you home so soon, when earth looked so bright and sunny, and life's dearest, sweetest hopes were all unfulfilled. But they waved their shining wings over you, and whispered beautiful thoughts to you of the Edenland afar off, and you went to join them, leaving sorrow here.

Blushing, trembling bride, who knelt by the altar leaning upon the strong, manly arm of him whom you had chosen, how subdued and low were the tones in which you whispered the vows, that bound you and him together forever: and promised a love that must never grow cold, or weary—never! You, with your gentle smiles, and fair spiritual face, and earnest, thoughtful, loving heart, when resting your hand confidently in his, and gazing trustingly into the face of him who had promised solemnly to cherish and protect you all your life long, how hopefully and smilingly you looked adown the future, and to your eye the stream on which your life-bark was sailing was smooth and sunny, with flowers of hope, and love, and joy growing all along beside it; and overhead the sky seemed blue and tranquil; and the angels of peace and love nestled away in your heart's purest cloisters, and fanned your

brow with their joy-woven wings. Oh, that sorrow's darker ones should ever overshadow them, causing theirs to fold in silence and despair! Oh, that storm-clouds should ever sweep athwart the sunlit sky of your existence, and your life-stream grow rough and troubled with dark, tempestuous waves beating against your frail bark, and wailing winds go moaning, sighing by it, oh, how sadly!

No, no, you didn't think it could ever be thus; for you didn't think he whom you so loved, so trusted, for whom you had given up so much, would ever prove false to you—false to himself—false to his God. You didn't think that he who seemed so pure, noble, and generous, could fall, that his brilliant intellect could be shrouded in such terrible darkness. Oh, what hours of anguish were thine, when he first staggered home to you a drunkard, with the fire of insanity burning in his eyes, and his manly face red and distorted. You, his wife, the companion of his bosom, to see how he had fallen. All through the lonely watches of that first sorrowful night, God only knows what you suffered, as you knelt by the inebriate husband's bedside, with pallid brow, clasped hands, eyes dim with tears, and heart almost crushed and broken. That night was but the prelude of other and more soul-sickening ones. In vain you knelt, and with pleading, imploring tones, besought him to come home again—discard the cup in which lurked ten thousand demons, and dark, fiendish spirits—and for the sake of the olden-time love and joy, for the sake of you, his broken-hearted wife, be again a kind, tender husband. In vain! The little white cottage with its honeysuckles, and woodbines, and climbing roses was given up for a low, cold hut scarcely tenable.

But sometimes, when the fire in his bosom burned low, and his poor, shattered mind would regain something of its original tone, he would realize the extent of your misery, and would part the hair from your weary brow, and gaze into your pale, wasted, sunken face, with such a remorseful, repentant look, and would kiss you with so much of the olden tenderness, that something very like a hope would spring up in your heart; but oh, how soon to be blighted. And at last the closing up scene, where he, to whom you had clung through so much wretchedness, was prostrated with a slow fever that finished his earthly career forever. No, poor, weary, heart-crushed mourner, you didn't think your heart's idol would fall from the pedestal, on which you had placed it, shattered and broken. You didn't think what a life of hopeless anguish and darkness was before you, and how the dearest hopes,

and sweetest dreams of life would be wrecked and blighted. But, stricken one, there is a land where the "mourner looks up and is glad," and where the care-worn and the weary of earth find a resting-place.

Proud, impulsive, faithless youth, who with love-tuned words, won to thyself a gentle, trusting heart, with its wealth of love and tenderness, how easy a thing it is for you to grow cold, and negligent, and careless of the heart that beats for you. How easy it is for you to *forget* as you think. How lightly you can put away all memories of her from your heart, and not feel a single pang. It is only a "first love," and you must have a half a dozen, at least, before you think of wedding one, and *keeping* the vows your lips have so often uttered. It is *manly* to toy with the affections of a warm, loving heart, and you carelessly brush back the curling hair from your temples with a smile of satisfaction. You didn't think that she whose young life was bound up in your truth and love, whose dearest and holiest heart-feelings were given to you, would fade and wither like the autumn flowers, when the rude blight of an unfriendly wind sweeps over them. You didn't think her shrinking, sensitive heart would be crushed, and its every string severed and broken. You didn't think how she would linger over the golden hours of the past, and cherish memories of them, which could only perish with her, or how wearily and longingly she waited for the angels to come for her.

They told you there was an ominous, brilliant flush on her snowy cheek, and a strange, unearthly brightness in her eyes; but you didn't think she would die. Not until the spirit had left the beautiful clay, and the gates of Paradise were opened for another angel to pass over their golden thresholds, did you dream' the death-angel was flapping his dusky pinions over her, and whispering, "She was wanted in heaven." And they laid her in her last resting-place, and the damp earth was placed over her motionless breast, heavily. And it was cold, and lonely, and chill, down low where they put her with her broken heart; but on the green turf that was placed over her, the sunbeams rested ever so warmly and brightly, and the birds hovered near it on noiseless wing, and angels kept invisible vigils over it. And, you, in your pride, smiled on, and words fell from you lightly and joyously as ever: but there was a remorseful pang in your heart, which you thought would soon pass away. You didn't think how many sorrowful, repentant hours, how many regretful moments, how many agonizing thoughts, and heart-pangs you had laid

up for yourself in the dim, shadowy future. No, you *didn't think!*

Old man with wrinkled brow, tottering footsteps, bending form, and dim, faded eyes, that look yearningly toward the land of glory; when youth was thine and earth seemed so bright and beautiful, you didn't think how soon youth would depart, and the bright spots in life become dim and obscured. You didn't think how many shadows there are to fall on one's pathway, how many storm-clouds to chase away the sunbeams. You never thought how soon your budding hopes would wither and fade, or you learn how far away Eden-life lies beyond the grave. You didn't think those cherished friends, the loved of years, would fall away one by one, and you be left alone going tremblingly, and with grey head adown the dim road that leads to death.

You didn't think in early life what a little way it was to "three score years and ten," and how soon your years would be numbered, and your life be but "as a tale that is told," even the last chapter in it finished. You didn't think life could be such a brief, troubled dream.

And is there one among the many children who make earth-land their home: who dwell in its shady and sunny spots, by its murmuring rivers, and whispering streamlets, among the fragrance-breathing flowers, the warbling birds, or in crowded cities; who gaze on the clouded heavens, and hear the wailing winds: but have often said, and can say as every year turns over now leaves in their histories—with, oh, how much of truth and sincerity—*I didn't think! no! I didn't think!*

## THE TORN POCKET.'

BY JANE WEAVER.

"My dear," said Mr. Huston to his young wife, as he rose from the breakfast-table, "I wish you would mend my over-coat pocket. The day is pleasant, so that I can leave the coat off without inconvenience."

"Very well, my love," was the reply, and, a moment after, the front door closed on the husband, who departed to the store, where he filled the place of a responsible clerk.

Mrs. Huston rose to attend to her domestic affairs, and occupied in them soon forgot the torn pocket. About noon, she had finished her work, and having a spare hour before dinner, she sat down and took up a late novel. In this way she continued to overlook the torn pocket, until the meal was over, and her husband had again left the house, when going to look for the over-coat, she found that Mr. Huston had put it on, the weather having grown colder.

"Oh! well, it will do to-night," said the wife. "I suppose he'll scold, when he finds I forgot it; but it can't be helped now."

The truth was, Mrs. Huston was what is called "a good, easy woman;" that is she never intentionally harmed any one, but was only thoughtless and forgetful: her sins were those of omission instead of commission. So she found no difficulty in dismissing all uncomfortable thoughts concerning the torn pocket; and resuming her novel, was soon deep in the miseries of the heroine.

About dusk there came a violent ring at the bell. It was a magnetic ring, as it were, and expressed anger, or great tribulation, if not both. It made the somewhat nervous Mrs. Huston start with a little shriek. She stopped reading, and listened.

Directly the servant opened the door, and the step of her husband was heard, but heavier and quicker than usual. Her heart unaccountably began to beat faster. "Oh! dear," she cried to herself, "what can be the matter?"

She was not long left in doubt. Her husband came at once into the sitting-room, emotions of rage and suffering alternating perceptibly in his face. Frightened at demeanor so unusual, the wife looked up, her lips parted in terror, and unable even to welcome him as usual.

"See what you have done," cried Mr. Huston, passionately taking off his over-coat, turning the

torn pocket inside out, and throwing the garment into his hearer's lap, "you have ruined me with your negligence."

"What, what, have I done?" gasped his wife at last, as he sternly regarded her. "Has any thing happened?"

"Anything happened? Didn't I tell you I was ruined? I've lost five hundred dollars, and been discharged because I lost it: and all because you didn't mend my pocket. Nor is it the first time, as you know, that you have neglected to do what you ought. You are always forgetting. I often told you you'd rue it some day."

"But how did it happen? Can nothing be done?" timidly said the wife, after a while.

"How did it happen? In the most natural way possible. I had a note to pay for the firm, and as the bank lay in this part of the town, I brought the money up to dinner; and, on going out, put it into my over-coat pocket, supposing you had mended the rent. When I reached the bank, the money was gone. It was then nearly three o'clock. Almost frantic, I came back, to within a few steps of the door, hoping to find the money on the pavement. It was madness, as I might have known: but I looked again and again, asking everybody I met. At last I went back to the store. But the news had preceded me. The notary had already been there to protest the note; and my employers wouldn't hear a word of excuse:—I was discharged on the spot."

As he ceased speaking, he threw himself on a chair by the table, and buried his face in his hands. His discharge was, indeed, a terrible blow. Without fortune, or anything but his character to depend on, he saw, in his loss of place, and the consequent refusal of his employers to recommend him, a future full of disasters. And all for what? All because his wife could not remember the simplest duty.

No wonder, in this hour of trouble, that he turned away from her, and buried his face in his hands. No wonder he felt angrily toward her, the author of all this evil.

For a while, Mrs. Huston knew not what to do. The tears ran down her cheeks, but she feared to approach her husband. "He will drive me away," she said to herself. "But I have deserved it all, I have deserved it all."

At last she ventured to approach him, and at last he was induced to listen. With many tears, she promised never to be neglectful again: "it had been a lesson to her," she said, "which she would never forget."

Nor has she forgotten it. Years have passed, and the Hustons are now comparatively well off;

for, after a while, Mr. Huston obtained another situation, and finally became a partner in the house.

But to this day when the wife sees either of her daughters negligent, she calls the offender to her, and tells, as a warning, the story of THE TORN POCKET.

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## ADA LESTER'S SEASON IN NEW YORK.

BY CARRY STANLEY.

## PART II.

NEW YORK, March 5th.

THE time of the singing of birds has come, dear Maggie, and here I am yet, with no indications about me of the new life which is springing into existence, except the shop windows filled with summer goods. I know how difficult it is with you. I know of the patches of snow here and there, coming out white and glistening, against the rich, brown earth; of the vivid green that a sheltered grain field is wearing; of the swelling red maple buds; of the bed of golden, and purple, and white crocuses, peeping up at the sitting-room window; of the kind of Sabbath stillness that everything wears, at this time of year; and I'm a wearying for it all, dear Maggie, I'm a wearying for it.

And not a letter from home for a week either. What are they all about? Pray, *jog* mamma's memory, will you, in my behalf?

But I promised to tell you about the party at Mr. Vernon's, did I not?

Well, my toilet on that Thursday night was finished much to my satisfaction, as far as my appearance went, though with a somewhat sad heart. You know, Maggie, for I have before confessed my weakness in that respect to you, that I am very proud of my hair; it is the "crowning glory" of my person. Therese has often said that mine was the only head she ever saw that would be spoiled under a hair-dresser's hands; so it was with a good deal of interest that she arranged it for me on that night, half after a fashion of my own, and half after the present approved style. She brushed it till it was almost purple in its blackness, and coiled it around my head in large, shining bands, arranging the flowers which composed my head-dress in the most artistic style. A bunch of the crimson trumpet creeper, with long, golden stamens, fell down behind the bandeaux on one side, and a cluster of green leaves, half concealing a flower, nearly touched my shoulder on the other. But after all, when I came to put my dress on, I was a good deal provoked. Madame Deschampe was determined to have *half* her own way at least; a kind of a compromise, she made it, between fashion and decency; for the *corsage* itself had

not been altered at all, but she had placed a narrow blonde lace around the edge, which though it was very becoming, did not suit my notions of propriety. Uncle, in his goodness, sent up to my room, just before I had finished dressing, a magnificent cameo bracelet, cut out of a fine, large piece of coral, and surrounded by diamonds. Dear, kind uncle, I was more grateful for the good-will, with which it was done, than for the intrinsic value of the present, though it corresponded most admirably with my dress, and was the only piece of jewelry which I wore. I was in the drawing-room, and had just resumed my wraps, after undergoing a laughing inspection from uncle, when Mr. Blanchard entered. He brought with him three most beautiful bouquets, one of which he gave to each of us. By the way, do you know that the present fashionable way of arranging bouquets, is after the Hindoostan style? In reading a work on India lately, I found that flowers of each distinct color were put in circles by themselves. Mine, on Thursday night, was a kind of flattened pyramid, with a fine crimson camilla at the top; then around it was a circle of white rose-buds; beneath and around those again, a row of crimson camillas; then a row of white camillas; and beneath and around all, was a circle of delicious heliotrope; all contained in a white glazed paper, with a lace edge as if in a cup.

The hall of Mr. Vernon's house, from the front door to the staircase, and on the landings, was lined on each side with superb exotics in full bloom. Gushes of music, and the fragrance of the flowers, were making the air heavy as we entered. Even the mantels and toilet-tables of the dressing-rooms were filled with bouquets and baskets of flowers. White gloved servants, with pompous reverence, met you at every turn; and the nimble fingers of the dressing-maids, whipped off *rigollettes*, cloaks, and carriage shoes, almost before you were fairly in the room. The whole of the immense house, which is what is here termed a "double one," that is with a hall in the middle, and drawing-rooms on each side, was thrown open, and in a perfect blaze of light.

Uncle and Mr. Blanchard were waiting for us at the door of the gentlemen's dressing-room when we issued from ours, and Mr. Blanchard

stepped forward as Louise and myself went out, and was about offering each of us an arm, when my cousin said, "Ada, you had better go with papa, as you are a stranger."

Not exactly knowing what might be the etiquette on such occasions, I gave my place to Ella, and went down to the drawing-room with uncle and aunt.

Mr. Blanchard looked back with a half comic smile, when we reached the foot of the staircase, and said,

"You see, Miss Lester, how modest Miss Hinton is, she is afraid she has not dignity enough to introduce you to Mrs. Vernon."

Louise replied sharply, "I did it to prevent Ada feeling awkwardly; mamma is certainly a more proper person than myself to introduce her to Mrs. Vernon."

"Thank you, Louise," answered I, "but as I never felt awkward in my life, your fears were groundless," and with this little skirmish, we entered the room.

Mr. and Mrs. Vernon were standing by the drawing-room door, receiving their guests with the easy politeness of persons accustomed to good society all their lives. You need not raise your eyebrows, Maggie, when you read that, as if it was a matter of course, for it is by no means the people here, who give large parties, and "fare sumptuously every day," that are accustomed to good society. I have seen instances of purse-proud arrogance and vulgarity among the *parvenues* of New York—the aristocracy that sprang into existence but yesterday—which would shame some of the poorest people in C—.

There was a band of music hidden behind the large, flowering shrubs in the conservatory; and in both drawing-rooms, gay waltzers, in light dresses and flashing jewelry, were floating around, and threading in and out, "like a swarm of fire-flies, tangled in a silver braid." The drawing-rooms were also heavy with the perfume from the many vases and baskets of flowers scattered about. None of these, I suspect, came from Mr. Vernon's own conservatory. They were purchased, I have no doubt, of a florist; for it is customary, when giving large parties here, to hire the flowers which decorate the halls and staircases.

In the tea-room, back of one of the drawing-rooms, a refreshment table was laid, decorated with bouquets, at which coffee, light wines, oysters, sandwiches, &c., were served throughout the evening. The rooms soon became most uncomfortably warm, and after dancing a plain quadrille with Mr. Blanchard, and waltzing a plain waltz with Ella, I took my stand in the

corner as a looker on. Louise and Ella were both waltzing with all their might. Waltzing is almost the only thing, I believe, that New York ladies do with energy; and it would be much better to be left undone altogether.

Really, Maggie, these fashionable waltzes are disgusting; they begin with some show of decency; but before they have taken a dozen turns, the lady's head is completely pillowed on her partner's shoulder, and his arms are encircling her much more closely than is necessary for support. The license given to an unprincipled man is terrible, and one that nearly all avail themselves of. What would a father or brother think, should they enter their parlor some morning, and see an utter stranger, thus embracing a daughter or sister? It would cause a duel or horse-whipping before the day was over. Yet, in a crowded room of an evening, such things are sanctioned, because everybody does them. Moreover, to my uninitiated eyes, most of the fashionable waltzes are supremely ridiculous. The waltzers reminded me of lame chickens hopping about on one foot.

"You seldom waltz, I believe, Miss Lester," said Mr. Blanchard, who was standing by me.

"Never," replied I, impatiently, for I was thinking all these things, "except with a lady." "I am glad of that," he answered, so energetically that I looked up in surprise. I should really like to know what reason he has to be glad.

As nearly every article of furniture is removed from the *saloons* at a party, there were but few seats in the room, and these were chiefly occupied by dowagers in all the glory of satins, velvets, diamonds, and turbans; so Mr. Blanchard proposed that we should try the library, which being somewhat removed from the music, was free from dancers, and consequently was neither crowded, nor likely to be. People, who do not dance themselves, always congregate to look at those who do; so we left Louise silently floating around with swan-like grace, in the arms of a moustached foreigner, and Ella chatting away to a premature juvenile, who in every respect aped those older but not wiser than himself.

The library was comparatively empty, and we easily found seats. Away from the excitement of the ball-rooms, the sad feelings which had haunted me in the early part of the evening returned. After a silence, I do not know how long, I looked up suddenly, and found Mr. Blanchard watching me attentively. He seems of late quite inclined to do the only rude thing I ever knew him guilty of, to stare me out of countenance. I felt somewhat uncomfortable under the scrutiny,

but laughingly asked to what conclusion he had come.

"I rather pride myself," I added, "upon my unreadable character."

"Why?" replied Mr. Blanchard, "I never saw one more easily understood, if one could but take the pains to find it out."

I was rather provoked, for you know that I do pique myself upon being so reticent; and said, "But you must acknowledge that I am undemonstrative."

"Naturally undemonstrative, I'll allow," was the answer, "and not at all enthusiastic, I judge from what I have seen at the opera, and have heard you say about poetry, scenery, and so on," and the sentence was finished with a half kindly, half ironical smile.

After a few moments of silence he resumed.

"But I was just thinking what a New York face you wear to-night. Your dress is very charming. Pray is it that which has cost you so much study?"

"It is that which has given me such a 'New York face,' I suspect," I replied; and before I was aware of it, I had his arm, and was promenading up and down the library, pouring poor little Anna Richards' story into his ear, with an earnestness that, in spite of me, made my voice tremble, and the tears come into my eyes.

"I knew how such a thing must strike you, Miss Lester," said he, "but God forgive us, we are so used to similar incidents that they make no impression on us. Slaves in Louisiana, Sandwich Islanders, and Hottentots, whose miseries are vastly increased by distance, claim much more of our sympathy than these poor creatures at our doors. You cannot know of the crime, produced by want and desperation, in this city. I doubt not but it would be better for that poor child, that she should be peacefully laid to sleep now, in her grave, than that she should live to grow up to suffer as too many of your sex, who are situated as she is." Then, after a moment's pause, he added, more calmly, "will you do me the kindness, Miss Lester, to call upon me should you need assistance for your protegee?"

I have an indistinct recollection now, dear Maggie, of seeing persons come and go about the room, and being watched with some curiosity; but I was not fairly awake to my whereabouts till I heard Louise say,

"I would give a good deal, *ma belle cousine*, to be able to look interesting, and in tears on as short a notice as you do. It is vastly becoming."

"Miss Lester's tears do her so much honor, Miss Hinton, that they cannot fail to be becoming,"

replied Mr. Blanchard, politely offering Louise his other arm.

You cannot tell how grateful I felt to my companion; it was the second time, that night, he had shielded me from Louise's sarcasms; and I felt really willing, strong-minded woman as you say I am, for the first time in my life to be protected, so kindly was it done.

"Ada, you must admit," said Louise to me, more graciously, "with all your country prejudices, that a party like this is enchanting."

"I do not deny that," was my reply, "but you New Yorkers seem to think that parties are so enchanting, that you have no home-life at all."

"That is just the bane of all European society, and is fast becoming the curse of New York," said Mr. Blanchard. "Miss Hinton, do you know that I really envy your brother George, he has such a companion in his wife, and bids fair to enjoy a greater share of domestic bliss than any man I know."

"I am glad that Gertrude is adapted to domestic life," replied Louise, thoroughly out of temper, "for with her antecedents, she cannot suit a fashionable one; and it would be a pity that George should have married a woman fit for neither one, nor the other."

"I ask your pardon for differing from you," was the reply, "but there was not a lady, either in London or Paris, more admired for elegant manners, or beauty of mind and person, than Mrs. George Hinton."

"Do try then, Mr. Blanchard, to find a wife like her," said Louise, leaving us, and joining a group of acquaintances, who stood near the door.

"I shall take your advice," was the laughing reply, as Mr. Blanchard bowed to her.

At twelve o'clock the supper-room was thrown open, and the guests, many of whom pride themselves upon the elegance of their manners, rushed in *pell mell*, very much as some four-footed animals, that we know of, rush to a trough. The poor, starved beggars of the "Five Points" would not have scrambled harder for a missionary dinner, than did these well fed, well dressed members of the "upper ten."

The decorations of the table were superb. A pyramid of the choicest flowers in the centre reached from the table to the chandelier, with tiers of tiny moss baskets filled with flowers depending from it; whilst a half dozen other bouquets, each superb, were scattered about. The candy temples, which decorated each corner of the table, cost over a hundred dollars a piece. Luxuries, which you and I never even knew the name of, in our quiet country home, were put on here in wasteful extravagance; and the fifteen hundred

dollars spent on this supper, dear Maggie, is but a type of the suppers at fashionable parties, and not by any means a rare example. Champagne flowed plentifully, and the few wits that most of the gentlemen had before, seemed to desert them after supper.

I heard a person near me—I judge a retired merchant, who has made his money by *close calculations*—say that the bouquets and flowers for this party must have cost three hundred dollars, as they were of the choicest kind, and from the quantities of camillas, which at this season are seventy-five cents a piece. Just imagine! seventy-five cents for one flower! The peacocks' brains, which graced the feasts of the Roman Emperor, were inexpensive compared with this.

The wine seemed to have affected the feet as well as the heads of both ladies and gentlemen; for after the supper, the waltzing was really *furious*; and without being at all what they would call intoxicated, there were many ladies whose loud laugh would have shocked them, could they have heard it from another, in the quiet of a morning drawing-room.

Mr. Blanchard is universally courted wherever he goes, but much more for his fine person, position, and wealth, I suspect, than for his noble heart and cultivated mind.

After supper, the company thinned off so much that the drawing-rooms were only comfortably filled, and the dancing was much more agreeable than earlier in the evening. I waltzed with Louise and Ella, and went through a plain quadrille with Mr. Blanchard, the latter of which annoyed me, as I think he was disinclined for dancing, and only did it out of kindness to me, for he didn't dance with any one else during the evening.

His attentions, Maggie, are absolutely womanly. Their kindness, he would not permit us to leave till we were entirely cool after dancing; and as I was getting into the carriage he doubled my cloak over my breast to prevent me from taking cold.

It was three o'clock when we reached home, and though I am quite accustomed to New York hours, somehow my rest was broken with dreams all night, and in them little Anna Richards, and the gay party, and Mr. Blanchard, were jumbled together in strange confusion.

I am ashamed of the length of this letter, Maggie, but you wanted me to tell you all about the party, and I have only half done it, so what would a fuller description have been? You say that I have scarcely mentioned a party to you since I have been here, but I have told mamma all about them, and I knew that you saw all of

my letters to her. Don't forget to remind them at home that I am alive.

Yours ever,

ADA LESTER.

NEW YORK, March 12th.

A ~~whole~~ budget of news from home and yourself, *mi amie*, has put me in excellent spirits to-day. Mamma seems at last to begin to appreciate the blessing she has in such a daughter as I am, and to long to see me. It's very comforting to one's vanity, to be sure, but uncle vows I shall not leave here till the last of April, or if I do, that it will be without him, and that then I shall *only* go with a husband. I believe he thinks that all a girl lives for is to get a husband.

You ask about little Anna Richards and her mother. Did I not tell you of my visit to them, dear Maggie? I intended to do so, at least. Well, I bought some muslin and linen, which I did not at all need, and took them to Mrs. Richards to make up for me; for somehow, I have not the knack of giving alms in the matter-of-course manner that does not wound a person's feelings, I fear; and really one feels some delicacy in offering money to a woman who has never asked for it; so I knew of no other way than to give her work and pay her *well* for doing it. There is no romance in their history, dear Maggie, but a great deal of sad reality. I found Mrs. Richards in a small room, in a miserable house in Anthony street. Her particular part of the tenement was very neat, and I was much pleased with herself. She looks like what she is, a woman, who has struggled with sorrow all her life; for one after another has she laid her little children in the grave, beside her husband, who died of consumption; and now her whole soul is centred in poor little Anna, with the strength belonging only to those who have suffered, and have but one hope in the world to live for. I have been two or three times since my first visit, ostensibly about my work, but really because of the interest I feel in the mother and daughter; and have paid for part of the things in advance, under the plea of the necessity of her purchasing needles, cotton, &c.

By the way, did I ever tell you what Madame Deschampe charged for the making and trimming my party dress? including flowers, of course; why, thirty-five dollars, and aunt and the girls informed me that it was quite a moderate price. Verily, one should have the purse of Fortunatus, to live in New York. It is not to be wondered that the saloons of a fashionable milliner or dress-maker almost rival the drawing-room of a Fifth Avenue millionaire.

It is so late in the season, that all the large

parties are over; but as they cannot live here without excitement of some kind, music parties and reunions are now all the rage. These I like much better than the crowds we have been going to, particularly the music parties, only it never seems to be from love for the art, as much as from love of show that they are given. Much brilliant, difficult music is played and sung, but with an air which says, "Is not that astonishing?" rather than with a heartfelt enjoyment, and a gushing out of the voice as if one could not help it, and as if the music was its own recompense.

Louise has a remarkably fine voice, with a thorough knowledge of music, and is considered one of the finest amateur performers on the harp, in New York; but although I appreciate the accuracy of her playing and singing, it does not gratify me, for it goes no further than the ear, never touching the heart. It seems to me to want feeling and expression.

My ballad singing would be considered quite anti-diluvian, in the present state of music here, and consequently I never venture upon it, except to please uncle when we are alone, for he says he would rather have my "Auld Robin Gray" than all Louise's brilliant variations. He generally selects the hour immediately after dinner and in the gloaming, with the bright grate fire, the only light in the room, throwing out warm hues on the parlor wall. I sing him to sleep very often, I suspect.

Mr. Blanchard is kind enough to say that he is exceedingly fond of ballads, and when he has happened in, as he frequently does now, he sometimes joins me. That I like very much, for his voice seems to support me so, and I always catch some of the depth of feeling which so pervades his singing.

Louise preserves a contemptuous silence with regard to all this, except now and then to say that since Sontag sung "Home," "Comin' thro' the Rye," "Katy Darlin'," &c., all *higher* kinds of music will become unfashionable. Mr. Blanchard answers that he hopes it will, and with a little temper, for which the piano has to suffer, I give the keys an extra thump and leave it. Maggie, my porcupine quills are growing every day.

By the way, this reminds me of something which occurred yesterday morning. It makes me laugh to think of the anti-magnetic power which my stately cousin exercises over me. I am always ready for resistance, and preserve a dogged kind of obstinacy, which though perfectly quiet, I know she feels. It is "Greek meeting Greek," I assure you. Well, there was to be a music party here in the evening, and, of course, Louise wished her voice to be in fine order, so as

it was a blustering, windy day, and she wanted to practice, she did not take her usual drive in the morning. I desired to write to mamma, and had an interesting book to finish, so I also staid at home; and I believe that Ella did not go out, because we did not; so, strange to say, a clear day found us all congregated in the boudoir. Louise practised till she was tired, and then either from ennui or real indisposition she concluded to play the sick fine lady. As it was not "reception" day, she could not have expected visitors, but she nevertheless put on a beautiful, white cashmere wrapper, with an elaborately embroidered *jupon*, and a dainty little Brussels lace cap trimmed with rose-colored ribbons; and she threw herself on the lounge, with her crimson camel's hair shawl, for which she paid a thousand dollars, falling in soft drapery about her. I could not but admire her as she lay there, so statuesque did she look, every fold of her dress seeming to fall in its proper place, and her foot which is beautiful, just peeping from beneath her skirt, encased in its embroidered slipper.

My letter and book were both finished, so I had picked up a volume of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's poems, Mr. Blanchard was kind enough to send me yesterday; when Ella, who vowed that crocheting put her eyes out, and was looking around the boudoir for employment, happened to think that my hair would make a fine plaything. I was seated in a low sewing-chair, and let her twist it into all the fantastic shapes which she fancied, reserving to myself the privilege of exclaiming when she pulled too hard. At last she tumbled it all down around my person, exclaiming, "Oh! Ada, how funny you look. Don't she, Mr. Blanchard?"

I was still reading, with my hair on my face, but at the mention of Mr. Blanchard's name, I started to my feet in astonishment, and looked toward the door.

There was Mr. Blanchard sure enough, standing in the doorway, entirely unnoticed, by Louise, who was deep in the sorrows of a French novel, or myself, who was as deep in Mrs. Browning, till Ella looked up and seeing him, addressed that question to him.

"Ella, how childish you are," said her sister, angrily.

"Ada, if you *wish* to do up your hair, you will find brushes in my room."

The emphasized "*wish*" called out all my feelings of resistance, and as I found she was annoyed by it, I quickly thanked her, gave my hair a coil around the back of my head, fastened it with my comb, and *then* going into the next room I washed my hands and returned to the boudoir.

"Well, Miss Ada," said Mr. Blanchard, (I am Miss Ada with him now, instead of the formal Miss Lester) "so I judge you like Mrs. Browning from the total oblivion you were in, with regard to everything around you."

"Oh, yes," and here followed a discussion, during which Louise resumed her novel, and Ella crocheted vigorously.

"Have you read this, 'The Cry of the Human' oh, you must hear it," he said. At this, Louise laid down her book, and Ella her work. When it was finished there was not a dry eye in the room. Such is the magnetism of his voice, that the refrain to each verse, "Be pitiful, Oh, God," came out like an earnest supplication. I think we were all the better for it. Ella was quieted down, Louise more amiable, and I felt as if the rough edges of my temper were being ground off.

The music party passed off very well. Mr. Blanchard sang several times with Louise, infusing some of his own spirit into her voice.

I hope to be at home by the last of April, dear Maggie, and glad enough shall I be too. Uncle is already proposing my accompanying them to Saratoga, and though I say but little, I *will not* do it, that is just the whole of it.

Yours truly, ADA LESTER.

NEW YORK, March 2nd.

DEAR Maggie, I can think of nothing but the sad termination there is likely to be of my interest in little Anna Richards.

A week ago to-day, I awoke in the morning, and found it storming terribly. The sleet, and snow, and howling wind, combined to make it one of the most dreadful tempests of the season. The very whispering of the gale made me shiver in my warm room. Scarcely a creature was to be seen abroad. All through the day I was haunted by the recollection of Anna Richards, on the night of Mr. Vernon's party. I kept wondering to myself whether the poor little errand girl was facing all this, with her hollow cough and racking pains; and my anxiety made the day scarcely endurable. I *could not* go out, Maggie, for I never saw such a storm; and all night long I lay listening for a lull in the tempest; but none came. I determined that I would go in the morning in spite of anything. But the morning was no better, save that the wind was not quite so high. The sidewalks, however, were like sheets of glass. I could not ask for the carriage and horses in such a case, and it was as much as my life was worth to venture out on foot, and for such a long walk too, so I had to endure another day of suspense. At night when

the voice of the tempest had lulled me to sleep, my dreams were still tinged with the anxieties of the day. I saw little children with their dying eyes cast up to the heaven which seemed to shut them out forever; stiffening fingers that played with snow-wreaths, that had scarce known the touch of living flowers; little hands that were drawing snow-shrouds about them, as if under the white folds they would find warmth at last; supplicating voices calling out above the tempest, "I am sick and cold, my mother, oh, my mother;" all these with utter powerlessness on my part to help them, made it a night of agony.

I awoke the next morning to find what seemed to me to be the bluest sky and brightest sunshine I ever saw. Every tree and shrub, every twig, was as if encased in flashing diamonds.

Before breakfast was well over, some friends of my cousins called to take them sleighing; the gay world will have its pleasure, Maggie, and the snow lasts but a few hours at this season. I knew that my visit to Anthony street would be positively objected to, if known, so I put on my walking dress, and was just hurrying off, when Mr. Blanchard's light sleigh and splendid horses came dashing up to the door.

"Just caught you in time," said he, as he jumped out, and threw the reins to the servant, "this snow will all be gone by three o'clock, so we must make the most of it."

I am ashamed to confess it, but for a moment I was sorry that I felt it my *duty* to go to Mrs. Richards'. It was *only* for a moment though, and with a voice, in which, I think, there was not a regret lingering, I declined the invitation, at the same time giving my reason.

"That is all right," said he, in his kind way, "I will drive you down there, and after you have accomplished your mission, there will still be plenty of time for a fine ride."

This arrangement satisfied me entirely, so in a few moments we were whirling along; and I, with my usual impetuosity, was pouring out my troubles of the last two days and nights. In an incredibly short time we reached Anthony street. Mr. Blanchard handed me out, and said, that as his horses was warm he would drive around for a few squares, and then call for me again. I ascended the stairs and knocked at Mrs. Richards' room door. She opened it herself with a face perfectly leaden with trouble. She did not give me time to ask a question, but glanced with such a heart-broken look, toward the bed, that I shall never forget it, Maggie. There lay little Anna, with her breath coming pantingly through her parted lips, her blue, sunken eyes intently following every motion of her mother, and her thin,

white fingers drawing the scanty covering closer around her throat. I leaned over and spoke a few words to her, before I noticed the strange, damp chill of the room. The little stove, almost insufficient for comfort at the best of times, was dark and cold, and looked as if it had not known a fire for days. Oh! Maggie, to think that whilst I had drawn back from silken-curtained windows to a glowing grate fire, shivering with cold, this mother had broken up part of her furniture to burn, and when that failed, had taken off her own clothing and spread it on the bed to keep a little warmth in the body of her dying child.

"Have you had a doctor?" I asked, hurriedly.

A hopeless "No," was the reply.

"Forgive me, Mrs. Richards, but this is no time for false delicacy, you are in want of almost everything, ain't you?"

"She has not tasted a mouthful since this time yesterday," said the mother, glancing to the bed, and great tears came to her eyes.

I rushed down stairs, and found a little boy making snow-balls at the door. With the promise of a shilling on his return, I got him to go and buy an armful of wood, which is kept at small shops in neighborhoods like this, and re-tailed out at high prices; I went myself for a loaf of bread, some tea and sugar, and was just going in the door with them when Mr. Blanchard drove up.

"I can't go with you," said I, hurriedly, "little Anna is dying, and there is neither fire nor food in the house. I've just sent for an armful of wood."

The bright look with which he had driven up died away, and a moisture crept over his fine eyes, but without saying a word, he jumped in the sleigh, seized the reins and drove away.

The boy by this time had returned with the wood. Such a grateful look as beamed from the face of both mother and child. With tears falling, Mrs. Richards knelt down to kindle the fire, and I went into one of the neighboring rooms, occupied by an uncouth but good-natured woman, to see if boiling water could be obtained. A slight remuneration made the woman very accommodating, and I soon returned with a pot of tea. Maggie, it would almost have broke your heart to have seen the eager, famished look with which Anna followed me, as I prepared a cup of it, and some bread for her. With a hurried, trembling motion, she endeavored to raise herself on her elbows, forgetting the acute pain in her lungs, in the acuter pain of hunger. I took off my cloak, and threw it around her, and then supported her whilst I fed her. Her mother was anxious to do

it, but I knew that she was nearly starved too, and made her eat something herself.

God, in His mercy, keep me from ever seeing again the ravenous, almost wolfish look, of a dying, starving child.

Every mouthful, which Anna took, made her cough, yet with an eager, trembling clutch, she seized the cup, which I did not raise fast enough to her lips. I told her that she must not eat too much at a time, but that in a little while she should have more, when with a strength of which I thought her incapable, she grasped the cup, nor would she release it till the last drop was drained.

I had just laid her back on the pillow, covered her up warmly, and knelt down to replenish the stove, which poor Mrs. Richards, in her anxiety to eke out her treasure, had heated with miserly care, when there came a knock at the door. I looked up from the fire, which I was blowing with all my might, to see Mr. Blanchard enter.

"I thought I might help you, in some way," he said, coming right up to me, "and so returned. Let me do that," he continued, "I am better fitted for such work."

I cannot convey to you, dear Maggie, an idea of his delicate kindness, of his unobtrusive, yet sincere sympathy; I felt as if his few cordial words to Mrs. Richards, carried more balm with them, just then, than all the sermons ever delivered from the pulpit. This is the man that ambitious mothers, and gay daughters are courting, not for these fine traits which so ennobles human nature, but for his wealth and position.

After his departure, a well filled purse was found on the table; and subsequently a ton of coal and other needful things came anonymously. But I felt *sure* who had sent them. And they testified, dear Maggie, that *works*, as well as the *faith* of which he had been speaking to Mrs. Richards, was a part of his religion.

I staid till quite late, in order that the poor worn-out mother might get some rest if possible, and I learned for the first time that day, how thousands and thousands live in great cities. How fine ladies rolling in luxuries, cheapen the sewing-woman's work, and then neglect the payment for weeks; how delicate children, *fortunate* in getting employment, are overtaken beyond their years and strength; how, through driving storms, and pinching cold, and scanty raiment, and disease, and hunger, and breaking hearts, the poor are pitilessly driven on, till they lay down their burden by the edge of the grave.

They talk of "woman's mission," Maggie; I stand up for it now, her *true* "mission," heart and soul. There is so much in this great world

to accomplish, and so few, I fear, to do it. The chimerical idea, I used to entertain, of reforming the world wholesale, has entirely deserted me; but I *do* feel that every time woman has it in her power to lighten the burthen of some of her sex, or to speak the few kind words that may stay the faltering resolution of some weaker sister, she is acting out her real mission.

Just before I left Mrs. Richards', a grave, kind-looking old gentleman came in, who said he was Dr. Franklin, and having heard of Anna's sickness, had called. Another kind act of Mr. Blanchard's, I know. The physician gave but little hopes of Anna's recovery, but promised to call frequently to see her.

When I returned home, and told aunt of my day's occupation, she said, "Oh, dear how dread-

ful;" ran over a list of dainties which I knew the sick child could not touch; bade me ask the housekeeper for anything I should want; declared her nerves could not stand the sight of suffering; and then, in ten minutes, seemed to have forgotten all about it. "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven."

I have called every day to see Anna. She is evidently very near her end, growing weaker almost hourly. Mr. Blanchard has frequently accompanied me there, and thanks to him, her last moments are made most comfortable.

I was going to write to mamma to-night, but am too tired, so show her this, if you please, and she shall hear from me in a day or two.

Yours truly,                      ADA LESTER.